MUSIC AND LIFE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE HUNTER, AND OTHER POEMS
THE DARK FIRE
PARIS AND HELEN
IN TIME LIKE GLASS

MUSIC AND LIFE

ALTER AMES

BY

W. J. TURNER

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER
LIBRARY

First Published in 1921

TO

ELIZABETH BIBESCO

I DESIRE to express my obligations to the Editor of *The New Statesman*, in whose columns many of these essays appeared in a slightly different form.

W. J. T.

INTRODUCTION

PROGRESS IN MUSIC

IT is difficult to give a short conspectus of the development of music as an art by the human race, but I shall make the attempt. It must be clearly understood, however, that not only will a wealth of illustrations be left out, but that the ideas presented will be mere skeletons which the reader will have to clothe in flesh and blood from his own imagination. Two conditions are necessary in order that he may use his imagination to some purpose. Firstly, an acquaintance with good music; and secondly, some knowledge of musical history. It is my business here to guide the reader to the way in which he may attain this experience and knowledge. Before attempting this guidance, it is necessary to try to convince him that music is really important, and, in common with the other arts, is the receptacle of all that is most valuable in human life.

Nothing is more difficult for the unmusical person

to believe than that music expresses thought. The average Englishman does not know when he is thinking. Thought to him means a syllogism, he associates it with Euclid's Geometry, but he forgets that Euclid's Geometry is a mere logic, a mere *sequitur* of conclusions that follow from premises; he forgets, in short, that the innumerable problems and corollaries of Euclid depend upon a few axioms and postulates, that, if he could not imagine a "point" or a "straight line," there could be no such thing as Euclid's Geometry.

It is this imagination of a point or a straight line, this imagination of ideas, which is the real stuff of thought. This imagination may be expressed in words, in form and colour, or in sound. It is thus that we get the three arts of Literature, the Fine Arts, and Music. Fundamentally they are all dealing with the same stuff of the imagination. It is often objected by that type of mind which calls itself "business-like" that the imaginations of the artist have no reality, that they belong to a dream world and not to the real everyday world. Now this, like nearly all the business mind's thinking, is superficial. Consider for a moment! The business-like mind will assert confidently that two and two make four; but what does he mean by *two*? Can he take you by the hand and lead you into the streets of the everyday world and show

you *two* anywhere? He can certainly show you two motor buses, two horses, or two men, but he was not talking about horses or men, he was talking about *two*; *two* and *two*, he said, made four. Well, perhaps you will reply, two men and two men make four men. But did you ever see two men exactly alike? and if so, how can any pair of men added to another pair of men be the same as two other pairs? The only answer to this is to say that a pair of red-bearded men added to a pair of white-bearded men are exactly the same as four beardless men, *because you are not concerned with their beards, or their noses, or their eyes, or their complexions, or their height, or their morals, or their brains, or their characters, but with something which we may call their "manness"*—something, in fact, which we have never seen, invisible to the eye, intangible to the fingers, a pure abstraction, or, in other words, a figment of the imagination. So we find that when the business man talks so airily of two and two making four, he is talking of something that does not exist except in the imagination. It is an "idea" which he has inherited from the scientist or thinker of his race whose imagination first discovered it, and without these inherited ideas he would be quite unable to carry on his business at all. How utterly abstract or imaginative are the ideas on which we base our everyday life may

be brought home even more strikingly by our asking the business mind what two oranges and two men make. They make four, but four what? Not four oranges, or four men, but, if you like, four objects, and what we really mean by four objects is four visual sensations. Thus at the bottom of this everyday reality of which the business mind is so proud, there is nothing more or less than a number of sensations. The world of the artist also consists of sensations, but instead of being merely promiscuous and having only a commercial value, they are controlled and used by him to express in his work something more than the actual sensations themselves. For example, we are hearing sounds all day long; if we live in a town the number and variety of sounds which come to our ears is astonishing, but they remain nothing but sounds. The composer takes these sound-sensations and builds with them a piece of music which as a whole has a meaning quite independent of the separate sounds of which it consists.

Now the faculty of listening to music is the faculty of seizing and understanding that meaning. But do not mistake me. It is never a meaning that can be put into words. It is only a meaning that exists for the imagination listening to sound, and although there are types of music which may suggest to the listener various concrete images

such as cataracts of falling water, hot summer afternoons under shady trees,—to say nothing of still more primitive types such as music imitating battles, galloping horses, bleating sheep, and the actual cries of birds,—it may be taken as an axiom that the higher the type of music the less it will suggest concrete images and the more it will evoke indefinable and mysterious states of mind. I say indefinable, for just as there is a primitive imitation music, there is a primitive emotional music which arouses in the mind simple emotional states such as anger, nervous excitement, sensuality, and fear. The highest type of music does not do this: it presents to the imagination some extraordinarily satisfying but wholly inexplicable and indefinable beauty. What this beauty is nobody knows. We only know it is the most satisfying experience in human life, and it must, we feel instinctively, represent some immortal truth or higher consciousness.

The history of music is the history of the attempt, by the arrangement of sounds, to gratify the senses, to use and enjoy the intelligence and to attain to that ecstasy which comes from the contemplation of pure beauty. There is no doubt, whatsoever, that ancient civilizations, like the Sumerian, the Babylonian, and the Egyptian, had a quite highly developed music, but no trace of it has come down

to us, possibly because they had not invented a musical notation. Music would be a jealously preserved craft, and there would be an oral tradition handed down from father to son; apart from this, what composition there was would be in the nature of improvisation, but improvisation of a highly complex and expressive kind, not the sort of improvisation one gets from the modern church organist.

I have little doubt in my own mind that the musicians of these dead civilizations produced music worthy to rank with the works of Schumann, Schubert, and Beethoven. It is customary to talk of music as quite a new art, as if it were something that began in Europe during the Middle Ages. A certain encyclopædia makes the following statement:

> "It was not until about the year A.D. 330, when Pope Sylvester instituted a singing school at Rome, that music began to assume something of definite shape. Later in the same century S. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, did much for its reform in the Church; and further advance was made by Gregory the Great (590–604) whose system of musical scales is known as *Gregorian modes*. About this time a primitive kind of harmony began to be employed. Guido of Arezzo (1000–1050) and Franco of Cologne (*c.* 1200) between them laid the foundations of music notation. Guido may fairly be called

the inventor of Sol-fa, being the first to employ the syllables *ut* (now *doh*) *re, mi, fa, sol, la*; the syllable *si*, for the seventh scale, was not introduced till the seventeenth century. Franco's part in the advance lay mainly in the devising of differently shaped notes to express different time lengths. He also invented 'rests' and divided time into 'dual' and 'triple.' Still there had been, so far, no composers strictly so called. It was not until the rise of the Netherlands school in the fifteenth century that music as an art had its real beginning. Josquin des Prés (1440–1521) is described by some historians as 'the first composer of modern music.'"

This statement is superficially accurate but fundamentally false; it gives far too much importance to our modern system of notation, and it totally ignores the fact that music of a highly developed kind can exist, and certainly has existed, without any notation in which to record it. One has only to hear the ancient Italian folk-songs, collected by Madame Geni Sadero, for proof that songs of an extremely complex melodic character can be transmitted orally for generations. And let no one be deceived by the word "melodic"; melody is horizontal harmony; it is greater than harmony, since it contains it, as a circle contains a chord. Some of these songs rival the best songs of our greatest modern composers, and they are all far in advance

musically of the average song published to-day by Messrs. Chappell & Co., Boosey & Co., and other music publishers. It is frankly unbelievable that the Greeks, for example, who were capable of a poetic, dramatic, and plastic art which has never been surpassed, had not a music of correspondingly high development. We know for a fact that they had musical instruments and that they had scales or modes; historians even tell us that "such intervals as the quarter tone, the one-third tone, and the three-eighths tone were in common use: "*They were perfectly comprehensible to the Greeks, and would be so to us but for our lack of practice in listening to them.*" We know also that music played a great part in their drama. In face of these facts it is ridiculous to assume that the best Greek music was less complex, less expressive, or in any way less highly developed than the music of Wagner, Scriabin, or Stravinsky. Personally I go further, and believe that only the best modern music (and by modern music I mean music since 1400) could be put on an equality with the best Greek music. And what is true of the Greeks may be true, with certain qualifications, of other civilizations, such as the Egyptian. It is even possible that the music of the Greeks was richer and finer than any music we have to-day.

It now remains for me to say something of the

development of modern music since 1400. A detailed account of this may be had in many books. Here a warning must be given. Most histories of music contain a great deal of accurate information, but the criticism of composers is frequently unsound and the æsthetic opinions expressed seem to me to be generally extremely superficial and often prejudiced by contemporary controversies. I therefore advise the reader especially to put no faith in the opinions he finds expressed on the work of any composer who is still alive or who has died since 1880, but to keep an open mind and to judge for himself.

Making a rapid survey of the past few hundred years, it may be said that from 1400 to the beginning of the nineteenth century the musical activity of Europe can be divided into three classes : I. Church music. II. Court music, or music as a recreation of the aristocracy. III. Folk music.

Church music was restricted in scope through clerical influence, and the rare and refreshing periodic infiltrations of popular music into the Church service were quickly stopped—piety being restored by Papal purging. The Council of Trent, which sat from 1545 to 1563, recommended the style of Palestrina " as the only one fitting for the service of God." In England, however, where at that time piety was more natural and less formal

than it became later and where more individual liberty was allowed to the composer, a great amount of superb Church music was written by such composers as Thomas Tallis, Christopher Tye, William Byrd, John Dowland, Orlando Gibbons, and others. The magnificent edition of Tudor Church music, whose publication (under the general editorship of Dr. Terry) the Carnegie Trust is assisting, will preserve for the future the fine work of these men. But the strangling influence of the Church, which became more pompous and more careful of its dignity as it lost its virtue, was ultimately fatal to Church music, and since Palestrina and the English composers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Church music has not been music. Even J. S. Bach's Passions and his famous Mass are not the best of his music; yet though intensely individual they do represent a certain sturdy Lutheran piety, and they may be granted as an exception to the general statement made above. The absolute spiritual deadness of the bulk of English Church music during the nineteenth century must, I am afraid, be taken to reflect the state of mind of the church-going population of that time. Its one spark of vitality is shown in Revivalist hymn music which expresses (quite unknown to its exponents) a low type of emotional excitement arising mainly from suppressed sexual instincts.

It is in Court music that our modern art music has its origin. During the eighteenth century the highly cultivated aristocracy of Vienna, Paris, and London had a considerable musical culture; in Vienna especially many noblemen were excellent amateur musicians, and could and did take their place in a string quartet with the professionals. They were mainly responsible for the material support of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and others, and although they did not by any means fully appreciate the greatness of these men, or always behave like gentlemen, yet in their circle these composers found genuine appreciation and help, as may be read, for instance, in any life of Beethoven. The private bands of musicians, together with the subsidized theatre orchestras which many of these Viennese noblemen supported, were the foundations of our modern orchestras, and the fact that the people had nothing whatever to do with the development of modern music—the opportunity for the necessary culture being limited to a small class—explains a certain sterile intellectuality which ultimately developed and has become evident during the last fifty years.

It is the conscious and unconscious realization of this sterility that has been the cause of the recent interest in Folk Song. During the whole of the period under survey, when both Church and

Court were the sole employers of the professional musician, music continued to survive among the people; but it is safe to assert that with the passing of every century its vitality grew feebler. The people had no professional musicians, at least none of the highest order; for although every one of the great composers came from the people (a fact which is really rather astonishing) their exceptional gifts marked them out for early adoption into aristocratic circles, and their activities were then confined to the small highly cultivated musical world of the capital. Since the Middle Ages the widening gulf between the people and the small ruling class was a source of loss to both sides. The natural musical genius which every generation produces had in previous ages been responsible for all the folk-music of which every modern nation is now so proud; but henceforth the people were impoverished by the devotion of this genius to the service of a small minority who in turn imposed upon it considerable restrictions. Small groups of people always tend to evolve comparatively hard and fast conventions, the observance of which they call "good taste." They also become super-refined and hyper-intellectual. I mean by these two phrases simply that refinement and intellectuality became the chief objects to be pursued; for it is impossible ever to be too refined

or too intellectual, provided the refinement and the intellectuality are the artistic means and not the artistic goal. The composer of genius by sheer force and richness of personality may break these fetters and flood the music of his time with fresh life, but many musicians, who are highly gifted men, and who in favourable circumstances could produce much beautiful work, are unable to do this. Of ability they have plenty; what they really lack is vitality; and just as an anæmic or otherwise invalid person seeks an infusion of blood from some one more vigorous, so the modern musician seeks invigoration and inspiration from the folk-music of his nation. Thus it is that we have had during the last fifty years the extraordinary phenomenon of a nationalist movement in music, coinciding with a period of somewhat barren intellectuality. It represents the effort of the highly sophisticated professional musician to get new blood into his veins. It is, however, an effort doomed to failure, for the stimulus obtained is artificial and temporary. In order to have a mass of fine music constantly produced we must have a fine civilization and a common faith and enthusiasm for life. Luckily, we shall always have the man of genius who seems to spring up, independent of all conditions, but even he suffers to some extent with the rest.

Progress in music during the last hundred years, like most other "progress" of which we hear, has been almost entirely material. Whatever music the Greeks or Egyptians had, they certainly did not have that enormous paraphernalia for performing music which we possess in the modern orchestra; but all these new instruments and combinations of instruments have in themselves little significance. Like the motor bus which *can* take you from Charing Cross to the Bank in half the time that the old horse bus took, but *does not*—because the streets are too full of motors for it to be able to go any faster than a horse—so the modern orchestra fails to produce a result commensurable with its resources. This is, of course, only a temporary condition. We shall, no doubt, have a period during which the mechanical resources of the musician will remain stationary, while he progresses in the capacity to use them; that is the sort of progress we want. By the "capacity to use them" I am not referring to a technical capacity. Although the aural sense of the modern musician is sufficiently developed to appreciate the exquisite use of orchestral colour by such a master as Debussy, yet the average modern composer cannot use colour exquisitely, or indeed with any delicacy or beauty, and I believe that his æsthetic sense is definitely inferior to that of the average Greek of

the age of Pericles. The quite extraordinary lack of discrimination in our audiences would seem to support this view. Perhaps there is too much worry and excitement at present in modern life for men and women to have the repose which is essential to any great mental or spiritual development. What good art we get is due entirely to the few, both as creators and audience, who attain this repose, this quality of being out of the everyday world—often at what appears to the superficial as a considerable sacrifice.

It now remains for me briefly to suggest what æsthetic development there seems to have been in music during the historical period—which I have fixed roughly as from 1400 to the present day. The folk-music of the Middle Ages was lyrical, and though not the direct expression of emotion (for nothing valuable comes from the direct expression of emotion), it sprang from "emotion recollected in tranquillity" plus a certain direct joy in expression. The song with which the Sardinian shepherd greets the morning sun rising over the mountains (collected by Madame Sadero) is a good example of the wonderfully complex melodic beauty of which natural untrained genius is capable. The music of the sixteenth and seventeenth century European composers was mainly lyrical in the same way, but with a professional intellectual element

added. This latter element became more and more dominant until it culminated during the eighteenth century in the German composers, of whom J. S. Bach is the chief. In spite of all that has been said about Bach's genius—and no one admires his music more than I do—it cannot be denied that the intellectual, academic, or professional element in music shows itself in his work to have grown out of all proportion to its æsthetic value. If this is true of Bach, who was one of our great modern composers not because of his colossal technical skill but because of the quality of his ideas, it is even more true of hundreds of his contemporaries and successors. I do not think on the other hand that the comparative simplicity of Haydn and Mozart, who are the next great names we meet with after Bach, was due to any lack of technique or indeed to any technical change. I think it was simply a fresh lyrical outburst similar to the lyrical outburst in English poetry made by Blake, Coleridge, and others after the highly skilled but somewhat frigid virtuosity of the eighteenth-century poets of whom Pope was the most prominent. Certainly Mozart was Bach's intellectual equal in every respect, and if he did not achieve any of the prodigious contrapuntal feats of the older man, it was certainly not because he couldn't. Compare, moreover, the actual quality of Mozart's ideas with

those of Bach, and I think the palm must be given to Mozart. Mozart's ideas, like Bach's, are expressed melodically, harmonically (if you care to separate harmony and melody, though they are really one), and rhythmically. Beethoven expresses his ideas in exactly the same way as Mozart; there is no purely technical change. There is, on the other hand, a less lyrical expression. This was due not so much to an increase in dramatic instinct —for Mozart had as much dramatic instinct as Beethoven, as may be seen in his operas—it was due to a profounder consciousness. The dramatic instinct can exist at any stage of the human consciousness; it is simply a question of contrasting one thing effectively with another. In fact, it almost demands a certain simplification of things. That is to say, a composer writing dramatically begins by simplifying even if he ends by producing a higher complex whole. But the mood expressed by a lyric is single, and the change noticeable in Beethoven's work is due to the introduction into music of a larger share of human personality. Thus, when we say that Beethoven's music is richer than Mozart's, this is what we mean. It is not necessarily more beautiful; in my opinion, it is not as beautiful; it is, I think, less perfect, but it is greater in the sense that the ugliest and most imperfect man is greater than the most beautiful

bird. Schumann and Chopin each in his turn extended the range of human personality in music—Schumann, by introducing sentiment or idealized emotions, Chopin by expressing a romantic languor and the highly refined sensibility of a leisured and luxurious civilized class. Wagner extended still further the sensuous element in music, and added an intellectual sensuousness—in the sense that the ecstatic contemplation and dramatic expression of the ideas of sin and cruelty might be described as an intellectual sensuousness (see the *Ring of the Nibelungs* and *Parsifal*). This is an element which does not exist in the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, or Haydn. The modern French and Russian composers, of whom Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov are the most characteristic, have added enormously to our sense of colour in music, and have made novel and pleasing use of the tonal qualities of different instruments and groups of instruments. The Russians also have greatly stimulated our rhythmic sense. Finally, we have the astonishing growth of a music almost wholly intellectual, but intellectual in quite a different sense from that in which we can call Bach intellectual. This type of music descends through Berlioz from Liszt, and is best exemplified in the work of Richard Strauss. Its chief characteristic is its psychological cleverness. Anyone could tell just from hearing Strauss'

music that he was a man of great intelligence. He has the comic spirit and the keen perception of the intellectual for the inconsistencies, the follies, the mental and physical vagaries of human character. *Tyl Eulenspiegel* is the first masterpiece of wit in music. Unfortunately, Strauss is not as wise or as profound as he is witty, and he is deficient in poetic power, *i.e.* the power of creating beauty. Stravinsky also belongs to this class, but he is less of an intellectual and more primitive than the German composer. By "more primitive" I mean that he has more vitality and is less urban. If Strauss has brought wit and a worldly intelligence into music, Stravinsky has introduced an element of bizarre imagination which is not to be met with earlier. This is especially true of *Le Sacre du Printemps* and his opera *The Nightingale.*

To many people Scriabin, who is the last modern composer I shall particularize, is greater than either Strauss or Stravinsky, but in his case it is much more difficult to define what his contribution to music has been. Scriabin's music had none of the intellectual wit and intelligence we find in Strauss and Stravinsky, but rhythmically Stravinsky seems to me somewhat primitive and barbaric by the side of Scriabin. The dance rhythms of *Le Sacre du Printemps* are of course intentionally physical in character, but in such dance rhythms

Stravinsky finds a natural expression. Scriabin could never have written *Le Sacre du Printemps* on that physical plane. *The Rite of Spring* would never have suggested to him the ritual dances of savages with legs and arms, but a spiritual dance, a Dance of Fire, a creative ecstasy of the essence of the universe. The *Poem of Ecstasy* is, in fact, Scriabin's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and to my mind a greater *Sacre du Printemps* than Stravinsky's—greater because it is the expression of a deeper and wider human consciousness even if it lacks an imaginative or concrete image-making element which is present in Stravinsky's work. Scriabin is in character much more akin to Beethoven than either Strauss or Stravinsky, and his music represents the chief advance in consciousness made since Beethoven's time, although we may grant that other composers have advanced music sensuously and intellectually.

W. J. T.

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MUSIC AND LIFE

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I

ON LISTENING TO MUSIC

IT is safe to assert that of the large number of people who habitually go to concerts few get anything more than an emotional impression of varying intensity from the music they hear. If you hear from a distance two people speaking, you may get an impression of a quarrel, of anger, or of affection, *without hearing any of the words that are spoken*, and unless you go nearer that is all you will get. This is precisely what most of us get from music—a general emotional impression. But just as people are not always speaking with that particular passionate accent which makes a direct emotional effect, so music is not always thus accented ; then in both cases, unless we move a little closer in, we are unaffected, the conversation and the music having no meaning for us. Such music, we will be heard to say, is meaningless, or dull, or uninteresting. Of course it is, for the simple reason that we are not hearing what is going on. Now, only a small per-

centage of any audience does really hear what is going on, the rest are simply sitting with their ears pricked up to catch any note of anger, love, hatred, joy, gaiety, or voluptuousness that may be carried to their minds. This explains why composers such as Tschaikovsky, Wagner, and Scriabin have a so much wider appeal than composers like Debussy, Bach, or Mozart, just as it explains why a Chappell or Boosey ballad is more popular than a song by Purcell. Between "The Rosary" and Tschaikovsky's Symphony in B minor (*Pathétique*) there is no essential difference to the ordinary ear. Each produces a direct emotional effect and, of course, it matters nothing that the one is a song and the other a symphony; each of them produces an emotion which can be registered on any normal adult human brain just as the note of anger in a distant conversation can, and it calls for no mental effort to make that registration, to receive that impression. People who call themselves musical in the ordinary way are people who respond quickly to emotional sound-impressions, but they are mostly sensitive to the emotions, not to the sounds.

Now, the really musical person, or perhaps I ought to say the higher, the more developed musical type, is the one that is primarily sensitive to the sounds and not to the emotions. To take again our conversation analogy, it is the person who is most vividly aware, when listening to two people talking in the distance, not of the emotional colour of the noise — whether it suggests anger or good temper

—but of the purely aural cadence and clang of the voices, the blend and discord of tones, the curves and subtleties of the rhythm. A man in whom this quality of mind finds its extreme manifestation would be capable of not noticing that the two people were quarrelling and on the verge of coming to blows in his complete sensuous absorption in the cadence and discordance of their voices, just as Newton, absorbed in working out a mathematical problem in chalk on the back of a coach, did not observe that the coach had begun to move, but automatically ran after it, still conscious only of his mathematics.

But this really musical person is, on the other hand, not the professorial type; that is, or ought to be, obvious. To the professional or academic musician in his purest form, music is pattern and logic in sounds, and in every composition he looks for the syntax and the grammar. You may know him by his complete incapacity to distinguish between great and commonplace music; all he can see is good or bad grammar, and, like the compilers of many text-books in English, bad grammar seems to interest him even more than good. But on the whole I prefer him; I think him less dangerous than the emotional listener, who really misses all that distinguishes music from any other art. What a large proportion he forms of our musical audiences can be observed at the "Promenades," where the audience applauds so indiscriminately as to make one almost tear one's hair and foam at the mouth. There can be no doubt that for the majority of a

"Prom" audience it does not matter what the contents of the programme are. But these crowds are incurably fickle, they do not form the stable public which knows good music and will always pay to hear it year in and year out. It is among this latter public that the really musical people are to be found—the people who know that Gounod's Valse Song from *Romeo and Juliet* is delightful if perfectly sung, but unendurable if only passably sung. The emotional listener, however, will believe that Wagner's "O Star of Eve," however sung, is superior to the Gounod Valse Song. That is to say, he listens not with his ear but with his heart, which—it cannot be too often or too emphatically declared—is all wrong.

If, however, the average person listens with his heart and the academical or professional musician (as a rule) with his brain, and they are both wrong, in what way, it will be asked, is the really musical person supposed to listen? I would answer—and I do not know if the phrase is new—with his sensuous imagination. It is at once the rarest and the most arduous way in which to listen to music, and perhaps I can best further explain what I mean by listening with the "sensuous imagination" if I say what the first requirement for such a way of listening is. It is mental concentration. When I went to hear *The Beggar's Opera*, at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, the audience chewed chocolates throughout, and clapped hands violently after almost every song. Now, if you can think of diving after and

unwrapping a chocolate while Miss Sylvia Nelis is singing, it is certain that you are not hearing her, for if you were hearing her you wouldn't taste the chocolate—it would have no more flavour than water. Secondly, if you really appreciated fully the sensitiveness of her phrasing and the beautiful smoothness of her legato singing, it would torture your ear to hear the sudden hand-clapping as she finished ; but the audience for the most part is not really listening at all, it is just letting the music flow over it, and it finds it pleasant, quaint, and sentimental! It has little notion of the gulf that separates Miss Nelis from most of the other singers, and it will accept the ear-offending and exaggerated vocalization of "Peachum" with the same applause as it gives to a perfect "Polly" or an almost perfect "Macheath."

There seems to me little doubt that most of our audiences go to the concert-hall or the theatre more or less fuddled with food or drink. They have not eaten or drunk to excess, merely to repletion ; and, as every athlete knows, it is impossible to do good work immediately after a heavy meal. People seem to think that they can listen to music in a state in which no first-rate composer would dream of composing. They believe that no work is required of them ; but if it does not take quite so much mental energy to listen to a Brahms' symphony as to write it, yet it takes far more than the average listener is capable of. Large numbers of people sit through the "Promenades" in a state of blissful stupor, digesting

their dinner to the sound of music. It takes something like Tschaikovsky's "1812" Overture to make much of an effect upon them. Their senses are not bright and keen enough to perceive the wealth of musical beauty that is in any first-rate work. No one would wish to debar them from the pleasure they get, but it is a very tame and primitive sensation compared with the intense and passionate realization of musical beauty which comes with concentration and the exercise of the sensuous imagination.

II

UNADULTERATED MUSIC

CHANCE sometimes brings our way a perfect example of the pure musical instinct to which I have referred. I have said that most people who call themselves musical are really more sensitive to emotional than to musical sound. I compared them to people who, listening to a distant conversation, catch and are absorbed in the emotional note—whether of anger, affection, etc.—rather than the purely aural clash, cadence, and blend of the moving voices. I believe that great art has nothing whatever to do with that emotional expression, that music as an art has no business with the conveying of emotions, and that it is the hall-mark of bad music, as of bad art generally, that it is emotional. I suggest that except for a greater technical skill — which means, shortly, superior brain power — the composer of Tschaikovsky's Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Symphonies would be in the same class as the composer of that well-known song " The Rosary," were it not that in a few works and for a brief space in others he is musical and not emotional. Frequently he has no more right

to be considered a great composer than has the composer of the most sobful ballad that ever made a drunkard weep.

Even the greatest composers have moments of emotional weakness—moments, that is to say, when they are unequal to the enormously difficult task of writing imaginatively, and then they too fall back on trying to infect their audience with their emotion by some exhibition of what is, after all, hysteria ; or they fall back on cleverness and become academic and dull. The skilful composer learns how to play on his audience's feelings in cold blood. The bells and cannon of Tschaikovsky's "1812" Overture are the trickery of a highly emotional man who knows exactly how to excite us because he knows what excites him. But Tschaikovsky is a mere child in the game compared with those we shall have in the future, although, perhaps, the difficulty of not awakening our sense of humour will increasingly preserve us.

It is, of course, comparatively easy to agree with this argument while one draws one's selections of emotional music from such composers as Tschaikovsky. It is when we are confronted with such works as César Franck's D Minor Symphony or his Quintet, or with examples (and they can easily be found) from Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven, whose appeal is directly emotional and does not touch the sensuous imagination, that we are pulled up. Every one can recognize the gulf that separates the emotions of Tschaikovsky's symphonies from

those shown in the two works of Franck I have named. It is the difference between rant and religion, but, immensely superior as is Franck's symphony to any of Tschaikovsky's, it falls short of the greatest art just because it mainly touches the nerves and not the imagination. It excites us while we hear it, but it gives us very little to carry away except the memory of our excitement. Now, this is a good test. Why do we come back again and again to Mozart? Mozart haunts us because, though he is not academic, he does not harrow our emotional nerves; he is not like Wagner, a man letting off rockets in an excited crowd; or Tschaikovsky, a sentimentalist crying for the moon; or Brahms, a middle-aged man remembering his mother and his first-love; or Franck, a man shut out from heaven; he is not a mere tube through which blow his aspirations, his sentiments, and his regrets in a more or less chaotic flood; he is that most mysterious of Nature's secrets, a great creative artist, whose work, purged of all emotional dross, flies straight at the imagination.

All the truly great composers have moments of this power, and I confidently appeal to the judgment of all intelligent music-lovers when I say that it is the most enduring and precious quality in their art. It haunts and pervades the mind, but it produces no single emotional reaction. There are songs of Brahms that make one go home and untie one's early love-letters; there are works of Tschaikovsky and Wagner that make one immedi-

ately want to join a brass band ; César Franck has made me (although not a Catholic) go to Mass ; but I never heard, and never expect to hear of Mozart producing any of those strange and inartistic effects. He simply quickens the musical sense and is as inexplicable as life.

Now, if we accept my contention that the greatest art is absolutely free from the expression of any emotion that can be referred to in our daily existence as human beings, we are up against the fact that the greater part of music fails to satisfy this condition. I suggest not only that this is true, but that musical criticism has hitherto made very little attempt to discriminate between the superior and the inferior elements in the work of composers of acknowledged eminence. It is not always or even often that a composer's best works are the most belauded. What appeals to most men is emotional force. Beethoven is considered a greater man than Mendelssohn because he is a more passionate man. Beethoven and Wagner were great personalities ; they had power, and they make you feel their power in their music ; their greatness as composers as contrasted with other great men who were not composers is that they were able to express their individuality in their music. This, one must infer, is genius. I submit that such reasoning is thoroughly superficial and misleading. There may be some connexion between the dynamic vitality of deeply passionate men like Beethoven and Wagner and that creative power that under-

lies their musical genius; science to-day knows too little about these forces to say, but, speaking by intuition and from experience, I am ready to prophesy that it will be found that the emotional ebullitions of passionate men like Beethoven and Wagner—and three-fourths of their compositions are such—are wholly accidental and irrelevant to their real genius, and that their art will live only by virtue of the one-fourth (or whatever the proportion may be), which is that unadulterated stream of pure music springing up no one knows whither and speaking of no one knows what—not of love, death, democracy, or the struggles of husband and wife around a baby.[1]

I would not, for one moment, have it thought that this is an "art for art's sake" argument. That I consider to be an even more misleading and inaccurate conception than that, given genius, great passions make great music. I have the deepest conviction that great music is great because it is the expression of some profound idea in the universe. It is, if you like, an expression of the spirit, but it is not an expression of a great man's temper, or of his love for women, or for his fellowmen, or of his hatred of tryanny, for these are matters of another world, physical and accidental, like Carlyle's dyspepsia, which produced a great deal of violent emotional literature but no art.

If this is true of the creative artist, if he expresses an idea and does not merely give vent to his

[1] "Domestic Symphony," by R. Strauss.

emotions, it is interesting to apply the theory to the interpretative artist. It leads us to question, at once, the right of the most famous pianists and violinists to their position in the musical world. And here I return to my opening sentence, which said that chance has just brought our way a perfect example of pure musical instinct. As I sat listening for the first time to Mr. Jascha Heifetz in October 1920, I heard what I had never heard before—the perfect violinist. Let me say at once that Heifetz has not got the silvery tone and the almost feline grace or the tenderness of Kreisler; he has not got what Mischa Elman had once, the fiery ardour we associate with youth; he has not got what Paganini had, the magnetic personality of an altogether extraordinary man. But what have these qualities to do with music, though they are the most talked about by musical critics? Absolutely nothing! Impeccable technique, faultless intonation, and an absolutely pure tone are indispensable requirements only because the absence of any one of them interferes with, *blemishes* the presentment of the idea, but a silver tone or a golden tone gratifies the sensuous ear as a crushed grape gratifies the palate; they are qualities of an altogether inferior order and are absolutely irrelevant to art. Equally irrelevant and inferior are tenderness, sentiment, and ardour. These qualities are all delightful in themselves, and if a violinist or a pianist cannot give us the best thing, there is, of course, no reason why he should not

give us something for our money. It is even probable that more people will go to see him break a string through excess of "fire," or weep into the piano through excess of water, than will ever assemble to hear him play pure music, unadulterated by any admixture with his love for a red-haired woman sitting in the front row of the stalls, or with any of the other miscellaneous passions of what is, probably, a very third-rate human character.

But Mr. Heifetz can give us the best thing. Technique, intonation, tone are all perfect, but they only constitute a perfect medium for the perfect expression of the music. With an amazing (because so very, very rare) aloofness and tranquillity his musical intelligence expresses the musical idea. It is playing at the very farthest possible remove from the mechanical. The fingers do not play themselves, which is the fate that befalls most great virtuosos; it is a pure musical intelligence playing, unmuddied by any personal characteristics. Mr. Heifetz is only nineteen; it is unthinkable that he will always be able to play as he does now. Inevitably his human character will develop, passions and prejudices will be awakened and intensified, and presently they will affect his playing. He will become—what the foolish critic wants him to be now—emotional, and he will be emotional according to his character. If he is a third-rate sort of person his playing will become vulgar and full of cheap exaggerations and

emphases; on the other hand, he may develop differently, and his playing may obtain a conscious weight and dignity. But it can never be better than it is now; for such human qualities as warmth, dignity, nobility, or sentiment are mere banners raised above the crystal current of pure music like the street decorations below which flows the human procession.

III

THE PROBLEM OF MUSIC

IT has been said that any attempt to expound a theory that great music was not simply the direct expression of great emotion "will only confuse the plain man." This, I think, is extremely probable, but then this "confusion," this substitution of a larger and more complex truth for what has become a simple fallacy is all that makes life worth living for us plain men. Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Freud make havoc of the most respectable and sensible ideas, and all our experience seems to be nothing but a series of exploding simplicities. One cannot even fall in love without discovering that "things are not what they seem," and I am convinced that we are still very far from understanding the nature of music, and that, however imperfectly I may be expressing my meaning, I am, nevertheless, getting a little nearer the reality than those who say, "There is no such thing as the 'pure music' of, say, the Brahms violin concerto that can be separated from the dignity and nobility and general humanity and all the rest of it."

Here are the conclusions of a Geneva doctor

who, " after an exhaustive examination of different ' melomaniacs,' has succeeded in distinguishing five varieties and two main camps. The latter he calls respectively ' rationel ' and ' affectif,' according to whether the pleasure caused by music is mainly an intellectual or a sensuous one. Intellectual listeners may be of two kinds, ' techniciens ' or ' ideatifs,' and sensuous ones are either ' sentimentaux ' or ' emotifs purs.' In between the two main divisions is an intermediate class, that of the ' imaginatifs.' Thus the five varieties of listener are :

(1) Those whose pleasure in hearing music depends on their technical knowledge of the art.
(2) Those whose pleasure depends on the thoughts or ideas suggested by the music.
(3) Those who either consciously or unconsciously substitute images for sounds.
(4) Those whose pleasure depends on the sentiments or emotion with which they are inspired or which they discover in the music.
(5) Those who experience an emotion *sui generis* and not to be compared with any other psychological phenomenon ; in other words a purely musical emotion unable to be expressed in other terms."

Now, the interesting point is not so much this classification which, however, I think admirable, but the fact that Dr. Odier goes on to award the highest honours to the last class, maintaining that though numerically the smallest they are the most musical of all. Now this is really an extraordinary

corroboration of what I have been propounding. Unlike Dr. Odier, I have made no examinations of those whom he amiably describes as "melomaniacs." But purely from an analysis of my own experience I have come to conclusions almost identical with those expressed by him. This seems to me pretty conclusive proof that we are right. But I have something to add to Dr. Odier's classification, and it is that I believe one and the same person can belong to all the five classes enumerated. When I say "I believe," I ought to say "I know," for it is my own experience. If I have such confidence in declaring that the highest kind of music is not the expression of emotions but something *sui generis*, and that the highest type of listener is the type belonging to class five, it is because I have been a listener in every one of the five classes, and have experienced as a listener of the type of class five profounder and more lasting pleasure than in any other way. The argument, therefore, does not rest on *à priori* reasoning. It is based on the fact of a gradual development of the power of appreciation in an individual listener, and it is corroborated by Dr. Odier's exhaustive examination of "melomaniacs."

But how Dr. Odier arrives at his conclusion that the type of class five is the highest type of musical listener I do not know. The fact that I think his conclusion right must not obscure my astonishment that any examination of "melomaniacs" could lead to any sensible conclusion whatsoever. It

seems characteristic of that bogus science rampant among us to call persons fond of music "melomaniacs," and it is equally characteristic of it that the investigator should believe that, by judging the method of listening or the taste in music of numbers of persons, one could find out which is the best type of listener. Such an apparent "method" is transparent humbug. Obviously, there is only one sound way in which Dr. Odier could have carried on this investigation, and that is by reference to his own experience. All that his examination of persons can mean is that: (1) a majority of persons examined declared that they had knowledge of all five types of listening and got the deepest enjoyment from class five; or (2) that Dr. Odier took certain musicians as the acknowledged greatest composers, and found that all the people who preferred them to other and, by assumption, inferior composers, belonged to class five; or (3) that Dr. Odier belonged to type five, and those who were like him he called the best type.

Of these three "methods" number one is the only one which can be reasonably described as anything but a mockery and a quackery, and we are unable to accept it as the method employed because Dr. Odier says that type five is probably the smallest class of all. In any case, no one would accept a majority vote upon any question of art. I must confess to an extraordinary curiosity as to the method of investigation employed by Dr. Odier, and there is only one possible way that occurs to

me in which he may have arrived at his conclusions. He may have found that all the listeners of type five had shared at one time or another the sensations of the other four classes, and had come unanimously to believe in the superiority of that fifth type, whereas the listeners in the other four classes were capable of listening only in one or perhaps in two ways. If this, in fact, is how he arrived at the assurance of the superiority of type five it is indeed conclusive. Personally, I strongly suspect that this is the truth, for I have met many people who have listened in only one of the ways enumerated and their judgment has always been faulty. It is probable that it is best to be able to listen in all five ways, and not to be at the mercy of a one-sided temperament or brain ; but I have come to be convinced of the superiority of type five simply because I get more permanent, more profound, satisfaction from it, and, what is more, a satisfaction that is unique, which the other kinds of satisfaction are not. Moreover, this will give one a principle of criticism, a touchstone by which one can judge the music itself ; for I find that a great deal of music gives little or no pleasure to a listener of type five. You can only listen to it as one of the remaining four classes, for it has no existence otherwise ; it is either a technical *tour-de-force*, programme music (classes two and three) ; a sentimental and emotional stimulus (Mendelssohn, Tschaikovsky, etc.), or it is nothing. Therefore, if I appear dogmatic in my criticism of music, it proceeds, at any rate,

from the application of certain principles founded not on abstract theory but on experience, and is not merely the expression of a nebulous excitement experienced in a concert-hall. Neither is it merely technical as so much musical criticism is. It is worth attempting to work out a canon of musical criticism that shall be æsthetic, since musical criticism up till now has been either grammatical —similar to the technical instruction given, for example, by a teacher of harmony or counterpoint or orchestration at a conservatorium, or it has been impressionistic—the emotions of a soul among masterpieces. Few musical critics, it is safe to say, and still fewer musicians have any notion of what they are talking about, for musical criticism is in a far more backward state than literary criticism. I maintain, as an example, that practically all London's musical critics went wrong over Heifetz, for the simple reason that they did not know precisely how to place Heifetz. " Fiery or Frigid ? " was the query at the head of one criticism. The critics were confronted with playing that technically was flawless ; yet it was neither emotional nor could they honestly feel that it was mechanical, but they felt it must be one or the other, for the simple reason that they have all been brought up on the crude popular belief that executive artists vary in quality as they vary in emotional depth. They could not say that Heifetz gave shallow or sentimental emotional readings, for, so far as they could see, he expressed no emotion whatever. But then, the

devil of it was that never had they heard playing that was less like a machine. What the deuce was the matter with Heifetz? The problem seemed insoluble, so that all gave it up, and some sought refuge in mysticism—Heifetz could not grasp "the subtle influence behind the mere notes" (how does one do that, I wonder?), and others decided to take courage and call Heifetz "cold," although this epithet applied musically can only mean dead or lifeless, which is exactly what Heifetz's playing is not. The truth, of course, is simply that Heifetz played with a purely musical instinct of astonishing sensitiveness and spontaneity, and his playing was no more "emotional" than a crocus bursting into flower in a garden, and no more and no less "mystical."

IV

PROGRAMME MUSIC

LE Festin de l'Araignée (The Feast of the Spider), by the prominent French composer, Albert Roussel, is a work that by its clarity and ingenuity must please the cultivated musician, but although it frequently tickles the senses agreeably and by its logical construction satisfies the brain, it fails to satisfy our consciousness as a great work of art should, and it must be considered a composition of a minor order. It may be fruitful to inquire why this is so, because *Le Festin de l'Araignée*, being what is called "programme music," the inquiry may throw light on the subject of programme music generally.

I do not know when the term "programme music" was first used, but I should judge that it was some time during the second half of the nineteenth century. However recent the expression, the thing itself is not recent, for there has been programme music from time immemorial—not, as many writers would say, from the fifteenth century. When primitive man first began to take pleasure in rhythm it is very likely that one of the first of his

discoveries would be, for example, the excitement produced from the suggestion of an approaching horseman by a gradual crescendo of a repeated rhythmic phrase produced by knocking his knuckles on a piece of wood. The day when he discovered how to make the horseman depart by reversing the process would be a day of joy in that primitive musician's life. Now, obviously, there is nothing very exalted, nothing permanently satisfying to the spirit about this ; nor, I would suggest, is there anything very satisfying or of permanent æsthetic value about the modern immensely complicated and highly organized version of this musical activity. It is, I maintain, an unfruitful form destined to an everlasting limitation,—like that, for example, of the multiplication table,—and the reason is that it is purely mechanistic and, therefore, capable only of increasing complexity but never of æsthetic meaning. But programme music in order to retain our interest has sought to obtain some emotional colouring ; it does this by the imitation of what in life would arouse emotion, and it reawakens that emotion by association. The primitive man gets a thrill from the rhythmic crescendo which suggests an approaching horseman because in his real life an approaching horseman would mean danger, or a warning of danger, or at the least awaken an indefinite anxiety or excitement. That is the emotional content of his primitive rhythmic programme music. All modern programme music gets its emotional content in some similar way.

Let us now take M. Roussel's *Le Festin de l'Araignée*, based on the *Souvenirs Entomologiques* of Henri Fabre, and examine it closely. We find, to begin with, a theme on the flute against a swaying figure for muted violins which is not directly imitative of any sound in the external world. It therefore presents the mind with no image, but it evokes an indefinable sensation. When we look at the "programme" and discover that at this point in the music the spider is absorbed in meditation, we realize that the sensation we had was that of a still, summer day, and we had already recognized the affinity of the music to the opening of Debussy's *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Now, this is a genuinely successful evocation of an atmosphere. The theme is in $\frac{12}{8}$ time, and it begins with a bar of two dotted minims, followed by a bar of crotchets and quavers, and ending in a third bar, again of two dotted minims. It is not difficult to see why this should give an effect of some slight movement in general tranquillity. The first bar merely establishes the rhythm, the third bar sustains it; nothing happens except in the middle bar, where you have that slight flurry of crotchets. So, on a calm day, there is a rhythm of life, the pulse of the flowing blood, the transformation of the mounting sap on whose underlying current a leaf falls or an insect moves or a bird hops from one branch to another. *That* is your little flurry of crotchets. Now, this theme of M. Roussel's is exquisitely right, as are the figures which he uses later to

illustrate the efforts of ants to remove a fallen rose-leaf, and a butterfly's dance. I should say that M. Roussel, when composing this theme, did so from an imaginative apprehension of an outdoor scene suggested by his subject, and the theme is evidence of a real sensibility. No such sensibility is required to *invent* the theme of the entrance of the ants, a tripping figure in quavers and semi-quavers, where you get at least eight notes to a bar in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, so that even on paper the score suggests a line of black ants. This is the lower level of invention, one might almost say imitation. It is only a slightly more complex form of imitation than Strauss's imitation of bleating sheep in *Don Quixote* or the primitive man's imitation of a galloping horse. Even the theme of the swaying spider suspended in meditation is also imitation, still more subtle and complex. Intelligence would suffice for the imitations of ants and sheep, but a sensibility of a deeper kind than mental perception is required to represent that swaying spider and a sensibility which involves a greater consciousness.

Unfortunately, M. Roussel's work does not continue in that deeper level of consciousness ; he comes up to the surface thinking of his programme and constructing his music logically. This is the fatal snare of all " programme " music, that the artist must come up to the surface of his conscious manipulating intellect in order to maintain the connexion with his " programme," which is external. There may be an underlying programme, there probably

is one in all absolute music, but the point is that such a programme is not an affair of the conscious intellect, it is not external to the artist's creative consciousness, and therefore his creation is not imitative but proceeds from a sensibility profounder than that of the apprehending brain. When Tschaikovsky wrote to Taniev, "With all you say as to my Symphony (No. 4 in F Minor) having a programme I am quite in agreement. But I do not see why this should be a mistake. I am far more afraid of the contrary: I do not wish any symphonic work to emanate from me which has nothing to express, and consists merely of a purposeless design of rhythms and modulations," he meant by a programme the expression of definite emotional states in a dramatic sequence. Here, what is external to the creative consciousness of the artist is that framework of dramatic sequence which ordains that the first movement of the symphony shall express despair, the second melancholy resignation, the third bizarre fancy, and the fourth reckless enjoyment. But that is not all that is external; he himself is the object of his consciousness, *his* despair, and *his* suffering are the content of his Symphony, so that again, in this second type of "programme" music, we do not meet with a profound but with a superficial sensibility. It is a curious evidence of Tschaikovsky's shallowness that he should have imagined that the only alternative to dramatizing himself in music (instead of, as M. Roussel does, spiders, ants, and

butterflies) was to write a " purposeless design of rhythms and modulations " ! Tschaikovsky, really, only gave an imitation of himself in music. This is what all " emotional " writers do ; that is why their music is " programme " music as surely as is M. Roussel's Spider-Feast or any imitation of waterfalls, spinning wheels, flowing rivers, dancing dolls, or steaming cruisers—all of which have already appeared in music. Now, in absolute music the composer does not imitate anything. It is obvious that he himself as a human being to be apprehended by his conscious brain is as much a natural object as a trail of ants, and therefore if his music is a reflection of his apparent emotional gestures, it is " programme " music. If, however, it sinks deeper than the external, physical, and emotional world, down where all distinctions of man, woman, waterfall, spider, love, hatred, joy, and sorrow vanish, *then* it will be absolute music, and it is precisely because such music goes below the external divisions of things and yet is concrete that it is valuable. That is what I mean when I say that great music expresses some profound idea in the Universe, and is not the expression of the senses or of the emotions as is all " programme " music.

V

AN EXAMPLE OF PROGRAMME MUSIC

WE know when we see a work labelled "Italia" or "Rumania" or "Russia" or "Britannia" that we are not going to hear a masterpiece; but why is this? If patriotism can stir men to kill one another, why cannot it produce great music? Why is it that the notion of a Sinn Fein Symphony or a French Fantasia or a Tone Poem on Great Britain is felt to be intrinsically worthless and even slightly ridiculous, and why is it that the idea of an English Overture is felt to be not so worthless and less ridiculous?

It is, I believe, because the words "Sinn Fein," "France," "Great Britain" suggest political combinations or groups of men bound together *in opposition* to other groups of men; and I believe the vice in these words lies in the artificial realities they represent, lies in the barrenness inherent in the phrase *in opposition*. These words represent no fundamental reality, but a mere logical syllogism, a pure product of the reason, a parallelogram of forces in which one force is called Great Britain and another force Germany or France. In reality we

have not these distinct forces, but a mass of men whose nature is obscure, and the abstractions "Great Britain," "France," etc., created like a kind of geometry upon their geographical or spatial position are too unreal to form the subject-matter of music or any other art. The ideas, *as ideas or abstractions* are real with a reality of their own, as geometry is real, but, like geometry, they have been created by reason. Let loose upon the world they have consequences and can arouse passions, and so we can get a kind of music written which will express these passions; but we instinctively feel there is little virtue, little meaning in it. We know the whole thing is a concoction of our own; but we do not feel that we ourselves are a concoction of our own, nor do we feel that we have invented the green fields, the hedges, the misty landscape, the downs and moors and warm, huddled villages of England; and since the word "England," being less used politically than "Great Britain," suggests these realities to us, and not a political "idea" of our own invention, we instinctively feel that there might be a virtue in an English Overture which there could not possibly be in a British Overture. This explains why at all times the artist, like the scientist, as artist or scientist, has been so careless and so impatient of patriotic manifestations. Trying to increase his grip on reality, he resents this mock creation which inferior minds present to him, and he knows they grow so impassioned about it because it is, in general, the objectification of their

immediate material interests. *That* is their reality, that is the mess of pottage for which they have sold their birthright. They have used their reason to turn their material interests into ideas in order to give a purpose to their activities. This works admirably in the world of reason, which is a world of extremely limited relationships; but in the world of art, which is the world of ultimate reality and not a mental abstraction, its hollowness is exposed because we come to art with the whole of our nature seeking to apprehend it.

Now the composer of *Italia* has dived below the superficies of the map; he has not expressed in music the excitement produced by a too-prolonged contemplation of boundaries, during which one discovers that a valuable coal mine is on the other fellow's side or that one's territory just misses a fine and convenient harbour. It is not frontier music, and the national anthem is never used. To quote from the programme notes: "The first part depicts the passionate and superstitious population of Sicily languishing in the terrible heat of the sun or in the depths of the sulphur mines, while the second half presents the careless exuberance of the Neapolitan."

There were two ways in which Casella might have approached this subject. The first is the way of imitation, or, in other words, of programme music. Just as the poet might describe a scene accurately and convincingly, or a painter paint it accurately and convincingly, so the composer can

depict it accurately and convincingly. To do this he takes the folk-tunes of the Sicilians and Neapolitans and weaves them into a musical picture, but what virtue there is in the picture is in the folk-tunes, and what virtue there is in the composer is in his original sensibility (which made him select the right tunes) and in his technical skill; he has created nothing, but he has copied something which moved him, something which will in time disappear and live only in his copy. This is what Casella has done; it is not great art, because great art does not consist in copying reality so that we may have again the sensations that the reality gave us; but it is stimulating and enjoyable as the reality would have been stimulating and enjoyable. The other way of approaching the subject is the way of the great artist who, contemplating reality, gives it a meaning. If we can imagine a great composer contemplating these Sicilians and Neapolitans, can we imagine that he would be content to imitate the two scenes and call it *Italia*? Stirred profoundly, as he must be, he would endeavour to create some synthesis, to produce some tremendous unity into which these things would go, but they would be transformed. We should be presented with a new creation, with a work of art, in short, whose reality would be profounder than the superficial musical copies of these Sicilian sulphur-diggers and Neapolitan singers. On the other hand, this copy of Sicily and Naples is far superior to Casella's later attempts at cinema music

—his musical descriptions of artillery battles and Italian cruisers plunging through the ocean. Yet we were told on the concert programme that "this work was composed in 1909 and belongs to Casella's earlier and more conventional style, from which he has entirely freed himself in his later music, where he uses a more distinctly personal medium of expression"—as if it were necessarily a great advance to have a more distinctly personal medium of expression. Naturally a man's appetite changes; where he once liked jam roll, he now abhors it and wants a savoury. Casella's taste in sounds has changed; the harmonic flavour of 1909 won't do in 1919; and every man's taste in sound has an individuality that corresponds to the individuality of his taste in food, it has possibly the same physical basis, but this development of an individuality is not equivalent to an advance. It may synchronize with his decay as an artist; in any case, music is something more than a liking for particular kinds of sound. It was not Keats' fondness for such words as "tip-toe," "swooning," "quiet" that made him a great poet, nor did Beethoven's use of the chord of the dominant seventh make him a great composer, and, as I have said elsewhere, everybody to-day can use Debussy's whole-tone scale, but nobody can write another *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune.*

There is another point that interests me. I enjoyed Casella's *Italia* immensely. The construction is extremely well done. The tunes of the

sulphur-diggers are melancholy and moving, the famous *Funiculí-Funiculà* of the Neapolitans extremely exhilarating, but I wonder if I would have enjoyed it half so much if I hadn't known about those sulphur-diggers under the blazing sun of superstitious Sicily and if I hadn't had old associations with *Funiculí-Funiculà*. All art depends for its effect upon the mental capacity of the spectator or auditor, upon the content of the consciousness that contemplates it ; but it is a peculiar weakness of programme music that it depends so much for its effect on mere trivial, accidental knowledge to be got out of a Baedeker.

VI

THE MORALITY OF MUSIC

IT is a universal instinct in our race that a great composer is necessarily a great man, and we mean not great in stature, great in muscle, or greatly equipped in the struggle for physical or social existence, but great in some quality (or group of qualities) which more than any other we feel to be the essence of human life as contrasted with brute or vegetable life. We have this instinct about all great artists, we feel that they represent the human spirit at its highest, that they are indeed the human spirit in action, and all works of art are like the material skeletons, the moulds or fossils of that activity left behind in matter after the energy which formed them has disappeared. Some works of art are of the order of the mastodon and the great auk; they represent by-paths, side-tracks into which the spiritual energy of the universe ran quickly and suddenly vanished, but there are others which are in the line of true succession, they possess a strange virtue of generation, a power of increase, of spiritual fertilization. These are a sign to the artist that he is not alone, and in their presence the spirit awakes

—as though it heard its own voice. If this is true, what are we to think of the multifarious artistic activity of the modern world? More music has been composed in London during the year 1920 than was produced in Great Britain during many hundreds of years following the landing on these shores of Julius Cæsar, but of that large musical output of 1920 what proportion was the expression of that quintessential human activity, that spirit which is evolving in the universe? Not necessarily any! Just as the steam-engine, the aeroplane, and the telephone, singly or in combination, with all their like, can give no inkling of the moral state of mankind, though they may tell us much of certain of its intellectual developments, so the music of the concert-hall, the music-hall, and the home has no spiritual meaning, being as purely a product of the vegetable senses and the animal emotions as the steam-engine is a product of the intellect. Great music—music that is an expression of the human spirit—is exceedingly rare, and it is certain that very little of it has been composed during the last fifty years, but, on the other hand, our sensuous and intellectual activity has probably never been so great. Composers like Max Reger and Richard Strauss in Germany, Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazounov, and Stravinsky in Russia, represent an amount of cerebration that does and should compare with the construction of Cunard liners, gigantic bomb-dropping aero-buses, wireless telegraphy, gramophones, and gas-masks. They represent at their

best, be it admitted, a little more than that. They have alert senses, including a comic sense. They are sensitive to combinations of sounds, and they will, every man of them, tickle our ears for us, but, above all, the most characteristic of them—Strauss and Stravinsky—are keenly aware of human society and its incongruous and ephemeral relationships. Like the average novelist and dramatist of to-day, the superficial characteristics of an insignificant and purely opportunist society constitute their favourite subject-matter. Strauss and Stravinsky, like Shaw and Tchekhov, represent an imperfect escape of the human spirit. Something has gone wrong. They have been unable even to unfold their wings, and far from being able to leave the earth, Shaw cannot even leave the Fabian Society, Strauss the theatre, or Tchekhov the Russian provinces. When we consider the immense European reputation of these men we are amazed at their provinciality. All their work is topical to an extent that must stagger the observer who has any true sense of the unimportance of the ideas and conventions current at any epoch. And their work is topical because it is intellectual; it is not concerned with the human spirit, the human spirit never or very rarely enters into it; it is produced by the intelligence using the senses, and we get from it sensations of the order of those produced by food, drink, party politics, and mob excitement, instead of that spiritual ecstasy which great art produces. Such a composer as Debussy, who is far freer from the disease of intellectualism than are

most modern composers, is felt to be equally unsatisfactory in spite of possessing a musical sensibility so exquisite as almost to cloy our senses. But we cannot feed spiritually upon bon-bons, and unfortunately that is all Debussy has to give us. As for Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Dukas, Roussel, and all the other French composers whose music I have heard, they seem to me to be merely clever. Not so clever as Strauss, not so clever as Rimsky-Korsakov, not so clever as Stravinsky, and with not nearly so exquisite a musical gift as Debussy. They may call themselves artists, and they may call themselves composers, but they have as little in common with Beethoven as any troupe of conjurers performing at the Palladium. However, their clientele is wealthier and belongs to a higher grade of society.

Then we have another type of incomplete musician—it is the sentimental or emotional composer. Any man who thinks that his griefs or joys are in themselves worth expressing is mistaken. The first thing an emotional composer has got to learn is that no matter how intensely he may feel, that intense feeling is not of the slightest interest to anybody. When he has passed beyond all wish to interest mankind in his sufferings or his joys, and when in his artistic activity he is purged of all individual desires, he may perceive beauty with such suddenness and such intensity that he praises it as Milton imagined the Cherubim and the Seraphim praised the Son of God. It will be the sudden flowering in consciousness of the human spirit, and

it is this flowering of the consciousness which is great art. The portrait of the artist as drawn by Mr. Shaw in *The Doctor's Dilemma* has always seemed to me painfully inadequate and fundamentally wrong. Dubedat is a type that is quite common, the man gifted with exceptionally keen senses and a highly strung nervous organization, but that does not make a great artist: it is only the physical instrument for an artist. What makes the artist, it cannot be too often declared, is his consciousness, and the consciousness of Dubedat, far from being profound, passionate, and representative of the human spirit at its highest development, was, as Mr. Shaw showed it, narrow, feeble, and almost entirely visual—just as Debussy's was almost entirely aural. When the great artist speaks, whether in words or in music, he speaks of a world that is beyond time and space and beyond all ideas of good or evil, of to-day or yesterday, and he speaks of that world because it is the world in which he dwells. It is of the very essence of his nature that his mind does not dwell, as the minds of ordinary men do, chiefly upon the pleasures of the body or the satisfactions of social prestige. To imagine that he could be mainly occupied with such things is to imagine that he is an ordinary, undeveloped person who has not got beyond a very rudimentary consciousness. To compare such a person with a great artist is like comparing to a man a dog that runs about following its nose. We demand of a great artist neither tricks nor the vivid expression of

our own passions, but a profounder and wider consciousness than we possess ourselves. The values here are entirely spiritual. In judging music, as in judging every other art, there are no other values, and there can be no other values. But we have to admit that nine-tenths of the modern music we hear has no more spiritual value than the silver paper in which chocolates are wrapped, and its manufacturers, like the manufacturers of that silver paper, will not be remembered to-morrow.

VII

SONG-WRITING

THERE is a movement among modern English composers towards setting to music the words of the best contemporary poets, and in so far as it shows any real appreciation of poetry it is all to the good. It would be rash, however, to assume so much; but even if it only means that musicians have awakened to the fact that other arts besides their own exist and have their standards, that it is becoming and decent to pay such respect to their fellow-artists as not to set to music the feeble and vapid verse of the average popular ballad, it is an excellent thing. It must be remembered, however, that the poet is utterly indifferent whether the musician sets his poems to music or not. I am not speaking of the unmusical poet; he, it may be assumed, would be certain to welcome any setting of his words, for to him a musical setting would be equivalent merely to an "interpretation," a "reading" with pianoforte, of his poem, and one reading the more is so much addition to his public. The poet who happens, however, to have some understanding

of music looks at the matter in quite a different light. He cannot be a believer in "interpretation." For him his poem is a completed thing; it is a finished creation to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. He may even resent his poem being read aloud by anyone, for it means the thrusting of an additional medium between his words and the audience. I, for one, am against reading aloud as a principle, although I grant that an individual reading might be found that in practice would not discontent me. The poet uses words much as the musician uses tones; he builds up by the use of syllabic colour, rhythm, consonantal discord, and vowel melody, and by the association and juxtaposition of images, an extraordinarily subtle and complex expression, which must come direct to the reader from the words, and to which any intervention of sound—be the voice never so sweet it is still irrelevant—is fatal.

Poetry is a highly concentrated art like music; it is not the versification of ideas, that is why it cannot be paraphrased. There are some benighted souls who will ask a poet to paraphrase a poem, but unless it is mere rhyming, it is as impossible to paraphrase it as it is to paraphrase a Mozart fantasia. It is, I maintain, equally impossible to set it to music. The composer who "presents a poem musically in order to interpret its meaning" has mistaken his vocation. He should not be interested in interpreting a poem, he should be interested in

—or I would rather say "driven to"—expressing the feeling the poem awakened in him. Personally, I can hardly understand composers writing songs at all. It seems to me that if a man has the distinctive musical imagination which makes a composer, he would have no patience with anybody else's words; and if he happened to be blessed with the literary sense, and was stimulated by reading Walter de la Mare, he would sit down and compose a sonata, or a study, or a nocturne, or anything you will, so long as it was pure music, unhampered and unadulterated by the material intrusion of another art. This, of course, presumes an unfailing flow of inspiration—which has not been the possession of even the greatest composers. But they always possess their musical sensitiveness, their fineness of instinct, and their patiently acquired skill, and there will be times when they will be interested by such a technical problem as setting a poem to music, and then they will write songs. But even then the value of the song is entirely musical. The composer can do nothing, absolutely nothing, for the poet. To imagine that he can is to imagine that you can interpret a sculptor's nude figure by dressing it in an appropriate costume. Of course this is heresy to-day, when theories of presenting poems musically abound, but I am convinced that it is true, and I am prepared to confess that I very rarely hear, and never bother about, the words of a song. I am willing to admit that it adds an interest to the song to hear, know, or read before-

hand the words, but it is an intellectual interest comparable to the interest we have in knowing that Keats wrote *Lamia* in rhymed couplets with an occasional alexandrine. It adds nothing to the poetic worth of *Lamia* that it was written in rhymed couplets with occasional alexandrines, although it would detract from its worth if the couplets did not rhyme (or if the rhymes were forced) and the alexandrines were clumsy. So, although the words add nothing to a song, yet once the composer elects to use words, if he misplaces the accent or otherwise maltreats the poem, it is injurious to his song.

As a matter of fact, the modern song bears a strong resemblance to "programme music." It is not a lyrical outpouring, a melodic rhapsody suitable to any solo instrument, to an oboe or English horn, but most suitable to the voice, because the voice is the most beautiful and the most expressive of solo instruments. This, however, is what the best songs are, and they are equally effective if one does not know the language, but in translation they lose, which proves that it is only the *sound* and not the *idea* or *meaning* of the word that matters. The modern song is, on the contrary, a piece of scene-painting in music like Richard Strauss's symphonic poems. Now, the fact that the programme tells us that Don Quixote comes across a flock of sheep does not add to the musical value of *Don Quixote*; all it does is to make us listen to hear if we can recognize the bleating, and if it sounds like bleating

and not like donkeys braying, we think *Don Quixote* is very fine. That is to say, our real musical interest in Don Quixote has gone to pot. This is what has happened in modern song. The musical interest has gone to pot, and we are fobbed off with all sorts of adventitious and often highly interesting substitutes, which are often very well in their way and make an entertaining mental recreation, but they have no more to do with music than making anagrams has to do with poetry.

Now, I know a modern poet who has had a poem called "India" set to music by a very promising composer named Walter Clement, and he is very pleased with it. He thinks it is a very fine song. It has a bass which vividly suggests to him tigers tramping, tramping, tramping through the jungle. It makes him tremble when he hears it. "Ah!" you will say, "what about that song, then?" But, wait a minute! *There are no tigers tramping, tramping, tramping through the jungle in that poem!* The tigers are velvet-footed, still as great cats peering from the corners of darkness. There is not a sound in the poem except, perhaps, of the falling of leaves. The composer has forgotten all about the words. The poem stimulated his imagination and he wrote *music*—music that does not interpret the words, but that recreates what the composer imagined. Every work of art must have a germ, and there is no reason why the germ of a song should not be found in the words of a poet, just as it may be found in the going-down of the sun; but to "interpret"

a poem in music is as foolish an endeavour as to interpret the launching of a battleship in music, and those composers who feel drawn to such things had better be engaged in launching battleships, for they are certainly not creative artists.

VIII

AFRICAN AND SUBURBAN MUSIC

THE author of the *Life and Letters of Coleridge-Taylor*[1] was a personal friend of the composer. He had an extremely difficult task which on the whole he achieved well. So gentle, so amiable, so self-withdrawing and unassertive was the hero that to make an exciting book about him would have needed such a great effort of the creative imagination as would have turned it into a novel. Moreover, all that Coleridge-Taylor said and thought in the circle of his friends and acquaintances, so far as is conveyed by Mr. Berwick Sayers, had the atmosphere of the Polytechnic and the suburban musical and literary society. The book positively reeks of Norwood, Peckham, and Croydon. We feel as one nonentity after another passes through its pages as if we should never get out of sight of the Crystal Palace, and we never do, except when Coleridge-Taylor tells his wife: "I dreamt I saw Hurlstone in heaven. I was just entering. Of course we couldn't shake

[1] *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician, His Life and Letters*, by W. C. Berwick Sayers. Cassell. 7s. 6d.

hands, but we embraced each other three times. You know what that means—I am going to die."

This atmosphere one can justly say is not present in Coleridge-Taylor's best work, simply because what is most characteristic in his music, what is its real and undeniable virtue, is absolutely un-English, and is entirely due to his negro father, supplemented by his careful training at the Royal College of Music under Sir Charles Stanford. From his negro father he got his inspiration, his lyrical gift and sense of colour, and from Sir Charles Stanford he got a sound technical training and the rudiments of a sound taste. I lay stress on this partly because in the *Life* the father is somewhat rapidly disposed of to make way for the crowd of Croydon notabilities, whose influence on *Hiawatha*, thank God, was *nil*—if we except the generous gentleman who paid for the boy's musical training. After all, the father was essential and is, in addition, easily the most interesting person in the book apart from his son. Everything Daniel Taylor did was exceptional, from his becoming a member of the Royal College of Surgeons at the age of twenty-two to his infant Samuel; from his passion for Coleridge and the christening of his son after the poet to the culminating "turned his face towards West Africa and disappeared thitherwards suddenly"—which reads like an Elizabethan exploit, an Ethiopian jewel flashing in the High Street of Croydon.

Had Daniel Taylor not been a negro there is no doubt his son would have succumbed to his

environment, as most of our young musicians do, and in the regular progression from choir-boy to composer have eventually arrived at producing the sort of music with which we are all horribly familiar. It is evident to any competent critic that such lovely things as *Onaway, Awake!* with their chromatic colouring, their peculiar rhythms and vivid feeling, welled up in Coleridge-Taylor from his African blood, and have no place or counterpart in English music. It is the fashion to sneer at Coleridge-Taylor in certain circles, and no doubt he is frequently blatant, commonplace, and, at his worst, reminiscent of Sankey and Moody; nevertheless, there is altogether more musical inspiration in his work than in most of his English rivals. Coleridge-Taylor wrote music because he couldn't help it, whereas there is far too much will-power about the majority of our young composers. Their absolute musical barrenness, their total lack of any impression to express or of anything genuine to say, tricked out with infinite technical resource and clever writing, makes one feel that, beside some men who are continually being patted on the back in the Press, Coleridge-Taylor was a heaven-sent genius. And let there be no quibbling about this. Coleridge-Taylor had genius; his best works thoroughly deserve their extraordinary popularity. In fact, if he had only been of different intellectual calibre, if he had not been timid, but filled with a passionate belief in his own race and in its obvious superiority to much in the people round him, he

might have been a very great man indeed. For when we come to take satisfaction in his work from a national point of view we have reluctantly to admit that, while his virtues were all his own, his shortcomings he only shared in common with the generality of English composers. If by blood he was African, intellectually and in spirit he was English. Nowhere do we get the sense of exaltation, of vast and awful mystery, of spiritual tragedy and silences big with impending Fate as in some of Conrad's African tales. And it is just in his lack of imagination, of spirituality, that Coleridge-Taylor shows himself in harmony with his South London environment. His philosophy is of the suburban drawing-room and tea-party order; he takes life easily; it seems a pleasant, cheerful affair, unruffled by any dark questionings or violent passions.

I wish to emphasize this because it is so essentially the modern English outlook and is so natural and ingrained in our young composers that no one could ever hope for any great achievement in music while it lasted. Why our young musicians should always be a so much more tame and ordinary lot than our young poets and writers is inexplicable to me; but the fact remains that while our young author is mostly full of bitter intellectual energy and passion, shaking his fist at the universe from his lonely room, our young musician is generally to be found full of smiles, handing round tea-cakes and generally living as if the world had said its last word in the tennis-courts of Putney and the novels of

G. A. Birmingham. Not long ago a man produced a tone-poem on Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*. One charitably concluded that he had been attracted by the idea of doing Vesuvius in music; but even so, what a subject for a modern musician! There are, of course, exceptions like Vaughan Williams, Holst, Arnold Bax, Elgar and Delius; but it is interesting to note that the most genuine and successful things have been inspired by English landscape. Much delicate work, full of quiet feeling and lovely detail, has been done in this line. But anything on a bigger scale is less successful, and when effective is not original. How could it be otherwise when even in their smaller work our composers are passive and quiescent rather than acid and kinetic. In fact, the best English composers, those most worth listening to, are water-colourists. It seems that English landscape, the beauty of Nature in England, is still a source of real inspiration, whereas English life is fatal to inspiration. And I think we have the truth here. English life is almost completely suburban, it has no counterpart in any country in Europe, or in fact in the whole world. And the atmosphere of Suburbia is paralysing. It is a transient and jerry-built society for which it would torment Solomon to find a meaning and about which he certainly could not write a Song.

IX

SCRIABIN

SCRIABIN'S last two symphonic works have now been performed frequently enough in London for us to become fairly familiar with them, and repetition has proved what some of us thought from the first, that there is nothing obscure and chaotic, in construction at any rate, in Scriabin's later works. Dr. Eaglefield Hull, in his monograph on the composer, has pointed out that Scriabin had a passion for classical sonata form, and he gives the following "plan" of *Prometheus*: (*a*) Exposition containing nine motives or themes, pages 3–23 of the full score (pages 3–22 of the piano arrangement). (*b*) Development, beginning with the opening theme on page 23, full score up to page 56 (pages 22–43 piano arrangement). (*c*) Recapitulation, second theme on page 56, full score (page 43 piano arrangement). (*d*) Coda, prestissimo, full score, page 73 (piano arrangement, page 56).

Nothing seems to me to prove the futility of the academic ideas about form more than the fact that it can be shown that both the *Poem of Ecstasy*

and *Prometheus* are laid down on the lines of the regular classical sonata. This "exposition," "development," "recapitulation," and "coda" can be pointed out on the score with a blue pencil, but to the musician who is concentrated on *hearing* what Scriabin has to say, this talk of sonata form will appear the most utter nonsense. Naturally, I do not mean that he could not recognize audibly this exposition, development, etc., of thematic material. It is perfectly easy to do this after one has heard either work a couple of times, even without ever having seen the score, but if one listens to Scriabin's music in this way, it cannot fail to appear meaningless, however clear. Perhaps I can explain this by an analogy. The classical writers, when using the sonata form (I exclude Beethoven, for Beethoven sometimes writes in a manner that has a certain affinity with Scriabin), would create a theme which was an end in itself. Take, for example, the opening theme of Mozart's G Minor Symphony: six notes of a running accompaniment, and the melody soars into the air with a loveliness so exquisite that to ask what it meant would be as ridiculous as to ask the meaning of a rose. (Note that one does not ask the meaning of a rose, but one asks the meaning of a bad smell. We feel the rose is its own justification.) Of course, the rose has a meaning, but we do not bother about that until we have temporarily exhausted our delight in it, and anyhow we shall never discover what its meaning is because it is perfect. We

have got rid of the multiplicity of the universe; we have concentrated it all into one sensation. This is what Mozart has done for us in his opening theme; he has reduced the universe to an aural sensation. He does this by creating melodies—as some force, of which we know nothing, creates roses and other flowers. He places his melodies in a vase which he calls a symphony, and does this with such art that he produces fresh sensations of pure pleasure, and obtains exquisite modulations —passing subtly and daringly from one tint to another. It must be emphasized that here the real essential achievement is the melody which has no meaning but its own beauty.

Now, when we come to the work of Scriabin, we find that what the composer is really attempting to do is to create by the whole mass of his score, its seventy pages or so, a pure single sensation such as earth has given us in a rose and Mozart in a melody. It seems to me that there can be no doubt about this, for if we try to take the *Poem of Ecstasy* or *Prometheus* to pieces, they become utterly meaningless. We can play the opening F sharp chord of *Prometheus* or any of the following themes (they are rather phrases than themes), but taken separately they do not justify themselves. They have not the completeness of a Mozart melody or of a rose. They are indeed like the single petals of a rose and shout their incompleteness aloud. But how many people are there whose ear is sufficiently developed to get one single definite impression or

sensation from *Prometheus* as a whole? If we can imagine a Mozart Symphony which was one single melody, a melody which began at the first bar and was only finished at the last bar, how many people are there who would be able to perceive that melody? It would be almost like asking anyone to get that impression which we call a rose from looking at a flower a single petal of which extended to the moon; yet I feel certain that this is what Scriabin is asking us to do, and it explains why the *Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus* when first performed completely mystified the bulk of the audience, not only here, but in Russia. Competent musical critics declared that a lot of it sounded like mere noise. That it is not "mere noise" nothing is more certain, but what its real merit is we cannot so easily discover. It has, however, this hall-mark of real genius, that it is a definite creation, as a rose or a Mozart melody is a definite creation; it is not a clever weaving together of dead material, an intellectual musical basket-ware such as all the trained musical craftsmen of Europe can supply. I think this much everybody whose opinion is worth having will admit, but for my own part it is not without a certain regret that I see the direction in which music seems to be moving. It is a movement from pluralism to monism—from the creation of a number of simple sensuous beauties like roses and lilies and the melodies of Mozart to the creation of states of mind. How much was lost when we lost the simple, concrete,

sensuous images of Apollo, Athene, Zeus, Juno, Mercury, Aphrodite, for the vague monistic state of mind which contemplated some utterly nebulous Jehovah, who could not be expressed in a single image because he was all-embracing and all-pervading? Perhaps nothing, perhaps it was a real advance, but if we admit that it marked a progress to a more exalted emotional state, we must also admit that we lost a number of beautiful if smaller sensations. So in the evolution from the plurality of melody to the harmonic monism of modern music we have lost a great deal of concrete beauty.

X

SONOROUS ALCOHOL

IT is thought that the French are a hard-headed, illusion-shattering race—at least those Frenchmen who put pen to paper and express their attitude to the Universe in the national equivalent of Stephens' blue-black ink. Particularly is this so, it is imagined, when their subject is one of the arts, but I have just been reading a book on music,[1] of which my copy is marked tenth edition, that is in parts as bewilderingly fanciful as any that ever came out of the United Kingdom, Massachusetts or Ohio, U.S.A. M. Mauclair has made what he considers a significant discovery: he has noticed what has hitherto escaped observation, namely, that an orchestra is an electric battery, and that what for nearly a hundred years we have taken to be music is really electric fluid. This electric fluid, it would seem, did not begin to be generated until the later days of Beethoven. In fact, I am not sure whether M. Mauclair considers Beethoven to have generated any electric fluid or not. I think, however, his position is that it is

[1] *La Religion de la Musique*, by Camille Mauclair.

the orchestra and not the composer that generates the fluid, for he specifically exempts all combinations of instruments and voices, all "concerts" before the days of the modern symphony orchestra from this affinity with zinc, carbon, and sulphuric acid.

"Vocal or instrumental music that comes from one man or even from three or four has in no way the elemental character of an orchestra. Music only really began to make itself felt in the Universe on the day when it appeared in an orchestral form. Similarly, that electro-magnetism with which certain human beings were saturated, endowing them with a certain ambient power, of varying extent, has only commenced its activity in the Universe from the day that saw its elements assembled in the galvanic battery. Without the orchestra no democratic formation of art could have sprung from music. Without the battery the fixing of the vital fluid would never have taken place outside the limits of the individuals in which it presented itself as charm or force of will. The orchestra and the galvanic battery have made possible the distant transport of forces hitherto localized."

I am afraid that if I had seen the above paragraph quoted as an example of M. Mauclair's ideas on music I should have lost interest in his opinions, although its last sentence may arrest attention. It may be true that the quality of charm in a person springs from a chemical transformation of bodily tissue, and that it is closely related to that electric charm that is produced by the waste of metals in

acids or by similar processes; it may be true that *le fluide musical* of M. Mauclair's compatriots is produced by the wasting of catgut and rosin, and *le fluide musical* of our recent enemies by the transformation of beer into tears, but large as the element of truth may be in these apparently fantastic conceptions, they leave us, after we have admitted them, very much where we were before. We are not learning a great deal when we learn that: *fluide vital, electrique, magnetique, musical " ne sont qu'une même chose " ;* we begin learning when we begin to discover the differences between *le fluide musical* and *le fluide electrique,* not the resemblances. In short, Monsieur Mauclair suffers in this book of studies from not having separated consciously his two functions of poet and musical critic. His imagination is constantly catching fire and pouring forth clouds of fantastic symbolical synthesis which would be more stimulating and amusing less casually expressed. Also then it might have had some meaning. But these waves of brain-feverishness that proceed from M. Mauclair with the vague purposelessness of the electric " waves " from one of his beloved batteries when one grips its handles convince one of nothing, and are mere irritations. Yet M. Mauclair is far from being incapable of analysis, and when his intelligence comes to the aid of his exceptional sensibility he is often very interesting. He asks the question why music has apparently developed so much later than any other of the arts, and, dismissing the suggestions

that the human ear was less easily educable than the senses of sight and touch, or that our modern instruments demanded a scientific ingenuity beyond the capacity of antiquity, he suggests that the true explanation is that modern music is a collective, a democratic art :

" Music has become the collectivist art. That is the true explanation of the indifference to the invention of multiple instruments lasting so long. The formation of an orchestra in the image of a crowd only seemed desirable at the very moment when the arrival of the other arts at the height of individualism made the hieratic rôle of music no longer useful. The choral has been the culminating expression in language of a union of musical wills ; the orchestra is directly opposed to this inasmuch as it offers the means of mutually dissolving wills."

The satisfaction our ancestors got from music, says M. Mauclair, was mental. Rhythm was a sonorous geometry reinforcing the meaning of the individual word. The choral and the individual human song were means for the enunciation and the transmission of thought, and the human voice kept its prestige as the finest of instruments because it stood for the supreme form of the free, spoken word. When, however, men began to take delight in the susceptibility of the nerves, when they began to demand from the subtle vibrations of certain materials a voluptuousness which was its own end, when the last idea of hieratic ritual had disappeared from profane music, when the essential elements had sorted themselves out and

had found in the other arts a means of perfect enunciation without any need of vocal rhythm to mark their significance, then, and only then, did men consider perfectioning tonal delights, and developing the material sources of that physical sensuality which had previously been merely accessory to an emotion of thought. From an intellectual joy they passed to a physical passion. This means, according to M. Mauclair, that music has only been music during the last hundred years ; before that it was a gesture arresting the attention, a physical emphasis underlining the human thought. There is a great deal to be said for this theory, and it fits in with the tendency of modern criticism to insist on the unemotional character of music as we are beginning to understand it. " After having admitted into the severe geometry of primitive song the ornamental imitation of natural sounds as a decorative feature, we have come to make music consist of the transcription of this '*decor*' . . . the natural magic of sounds invading the soul and dissolving the will is the height of our present musical satisfaction." M. Mauclair does not develop this idea beyond declaring that orchestral music is a magnetic bath in which we get a stupefying pleasure from the momentary dissolution of our wills, and that chamber music, on the contrary, is hieratic : " la musique de chambre est notre voix qui parle : l'orchestre est la nature qui lui répond et l'étouffe dans son immense murmure où miroite le reflet de l'univers, Ulysse et les Sirènes. . . ."

All M. Mauclair's ideas dissolve into these grandiose images, but their meaning is clearer for being graphic. There is little doubt that the modern composer has lost control through the hugeness of the orchestral resources which are at his disposal, but which he does not command; he can summon spirits from the vasty deep, but their cries engulf him, and as he sinks he weakly struggles to pass on to his listeners the tumultuous sounds that murmur around him. Our sensibility has outrun our powers of selection, our will is surrendered to a multitude of sensations of which we cannot deny ourselves one. This is no moral weakness, as the ignorant and narrow-minded will rush foolishly to believe; it is merely an irregular development. All our human powers do not march parallel in their evolution; some get ahead of others, and the enormous increase in our sensibility which has taken place, not only in musical sensibility, as M. Mauclair seems to think, but on most sides of our nature, and in most if not all our senses, is, besides being a source of immense enrichment to our life, an indispensable foundation for further artistic development. The great genius, when he comes along, will be master of his sensibility, though his sensibility has a thousand avenues of delight to every one known to his ancestors; he will be master of it, and of all the increased resources it gives, because of the strength of his personality. It is personality that synthesizes the revenue of the senses, and it is only personalities inferior to their

task that imagine they can get control by beggaring their senses. Therefore, although we shall certainly be faced in the future by people who will denounce modern music (when they have got sufficient intelligence) as "sonorous alcohol," let us be ready to smile benignly, and ignore a fatuousness which has pursued the progress of life consistently down the ages since man's power of speech became a separate faculty, developing independently of his power of understanding.

XI

THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

THE Philharmonic Society has always been like the British Government, it has feared both to progress and not to progress. Its desperate attempts to discover which way the wind was blowing, and then to oppose it while it was a mere breeze, but to run frantically after it as soon as it became an almost exhausted gale, have been a source of amusement to educated musicians. I say educated musicians, because musicians as a whole, until the last few years (very few), have formed the most ignorant and illiterate class in the State, and these musicians have comprised a great part of the Philharmonic Society's audience (they are not all dead yet). Naturally the suburban vicar whose daughters had got tired of asking, "What are the wild waves saying?" and the suburban teacher who hailed Cowen's "The Better Land" as the greatest of songs, and immediately planted it in the throats of the young misses of Muswell Hill, who were learning singing to the ruin of a whole generation's taste, would want to see the famous composer conduct at the Philharmonic Society, and so we have Cowen as sole

conductor from 1890 to 1892, and again from 1900 to 1906. Now, Sir Frederick Cowen gave them as much good music as they could stand, and, being a modest man, he was probably thirsting to declare that he couldn't conduct, that his songs were rubbish, and that his Suites of fairy whisperings and babbling flowers were all my eye; but what could he do? People would buy his songs, people would listen to his Suites, the Government would make him a knight. If he had said to the public, "Don't listen to my songs, they're no good, but buy Hugo Wolf's," his audience would have thought to themselves, "What a kind man!" and if anyone ever got as far as buying Wolf's songs she would have been more convinced than ever as to Sir Frederick's goodness of heart. So Sir Frederick, knowing that if he had written like Hugo Wolf he would have starved, and knowing how much better a man he was than hundreds who might have taken his place, and who had never even heard of Hugo Wolf, stuck to his conductorship and his royalties and his title, and sighed to think English people were so silly and so tasteless. All this time the little musical enterprise there was in London was confined mainly to Sir Henry Wood, who was not patronized by the swarm of local musicians who made up the Philharmonic audience, but had to find and get together a new public—a public that read Meredith and Hardy and Ibsen and Shaw, and studied Economics and Botticelli. Since 1906 the Philharmonic Society has been gradually altering; it has had conductors like

Nikisch, Mengelberg, Wood, Safonoff, and Beecham, and in the season 1915–16 the names of Stravinsky, Franck, Ravel, Debussy, d'Indy, Rimsky-Korsakov, Bax, and Frank Bridge proved that it was really alive at last. However, the ignorant old Adam is far from dead, he still moves in the paradise of vocal music with his retinue of substantial prima donnas and tenors whom no higher power has yet been able to eject. And it is here that we touch the secret of the musical beggary of our country in spite of its abundant native talent. The Philharmonic Society presents its Gold Medal to Clara Butt for her singing of "Abide with me," but gave no Gold Medal to Gervase Elwes for his singing of Vaughan Williams's "On Wenlock Edge." This sort of thing is an insoluble enigma to the foreign musician, and causes Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch to depart for the past where there were no Clara Butts, or "Better Lands" or "Lost Chords," where Tosti never wept "Good-bye," where Dorothy Forster's "Roses" would have been nipped in the bud, and when genuine expression was not drowned in noise and bathos, but the English were the greatest musicians of the world. When Mr. Cyril Scott attacks the "Ballad" he is attacking the root evil, because it is our singers who poison the nation's taste, and the mischief they do is so much greater just because a song penetrates hundreds of homes to every one reached by instrumental work. Commercial firms can hardly be blamed for exploiting the restless demand of an ignorant and depraved public taste, any more than we can blame the manu-

facturers for providing the trashy jewellery which is sold. But societies like the Philharmonic exist to set a higher standard—a standard which is not measured by size or expensiveness, but by quality. The public ought to be able to look somewhere for guidance. The Press, when not ignorant, is hampered by timidity and by an easy indifference due to the fact that few people at all realize how one's tastes in music, in furniture, in morals, in intellectual and physical life are all intimately connected. Neither William Morris nor the Vienna Secessionists could have redeemed from stupidity and vulgarity the house of a woman who liked ballad concerts, or the average vocal concert in England ; and a man who could sing " The Holy City " would always vote wrong. Among the main obstacles to the purification of taste are the Churches, with their hundredth performance of Maunder's *Penitence, Pardon, and Peace*, and their appalling local concerts, when some Ragged Boys' Home gets one-and-threepence as an excuse for the vestrymen's daughters who learn singing to display their talents. There seems to be something about a choir that attracts to it all the dullest and most inartistic people in its neighbourhood, all the people without any musical instincts, and all the people without any voices. The leading soprano sets the taste for the district ; she has generally studied for anything from a week to ten years with one of the great oratorio stars who, having spent half a century singing *The Messiah* and *Elijah* and a few " ballads " from one provincial town

to another, has lost all idea of what music is, and has never found it necessary to acquire any musical education, or, in fact, any education whatsoever. Yet these singers are countenanced and engaged by London and Provincial bodies of such standing as the Philharmonic Society, thus setting an entirely wrong level of taste throughout the country. The young people whose musical taste is first formed in the Church carry this taste with them into the Music-hall, and the close affinity in the music of both these popular institutions will have escaped no penetrating observer. We can safely declare that England will never again become a great musical nation until we hear real music and real musicians in the Church and in the Music-hall, just as less than a couple of hundred years ago you could hear Corelli's Sonatas in any London "pub." In order to attain this result the Philharmonic Society has to set the standard for the Provinces and Sir Oswald Stoll. This means a more discriminating distribution of gold medals and no more announcements that a certain gentleman "has graciously consented to sing," but an equal enterprise and a standard as high in vocal music as in instrumental.

XII

THE PROMENADE CONCERTS

WITH the best will in the world the true musician cannot always feel amiably disposed to Messrs. Chappell & Co. The financing of the Promenade Concerts and the Queen's Hall Orchestra in succession to Sir Edgar Speyer (to whom musical London owes an incalculable debt) left one dubiously suspicious that, sooner or later, just as the Bechstein piano was ousted by the Chappell, so would German music, or at least serious and great music, be replaced by something, in the phrase of the suburban grocer, "just as good, if not better." Such is the effect of the wrong sort of fame—the fame of the Chappell Ballad Concerts, to which the bulk of the English middle and upper class public has flocked for years. The fact that Messrs. Chappell & Co. have been merely supplying a demand (although there is no such thing as *merely* supplying a demand; it has to be tickled, and that is what the concerts are for, those celebrated concerts which begin at lunch and go on till dinner) does not excuse them in the eyes of the idealist, who can admire some one ready to

lose money in educating the public, but cannot forgive the mere waxing fat out of whatever low taste, ignorance, sentimental immorality, and frivolous brainlessness happens to be going. When Messrs. Chappell have continuously put their hands in their pockets to back up something good and great, then he will look up to them with respect—at present, however, he scans the programmes of the Promenades warily for traces of the cloven hoof, and sighs to think that in a *History of Modern European Music* the compositions issuing from the plaster palace in Bond Street would have no place.

The programmes of the Promenades of the season 1915, which was the first under Messrs. Chappell, showed (as might be expected) but slight evidence of the change in proprietorship brought about by the war. In fact, they seemed to constitute a sort of prize-ring in which conflicting ideas got alternately knocked down. We found, for example :

"Aria, Walter's Prize Song (*The Mastersingers*)."

One could hear Mr. de Lara chuckle as he saw that even Walther had lost his German "h." Immediately following, however, we had :

"Siegfried's Journey (*Götterdämmerung*)."

One can realize the difficulty of finding an English equivalent of "Siegfried" (Victorypeace's Journey would have been a likely contribution), but why "Götterdämmerung"? Was not that enough to make any true Englishman stay away—or at least stamp his foot and hiss at an appropriate place (as

Mr. Josef or Joseph Holbrooke suggested)? In another place, after printing "Good Friday Music," they actually followed this with "Charfreitagszauber," which was really too bad and quite upsetting to stay-at-home patriots. Trying to discover some principle at work led me to the hypothesis that the programmes were confused purposely, so that nobody could accuse the proprietors of partisanship, while the largest possible audience might be got at; and this task seemed to be divided between several persons. There is Mrs. Rosa Newmarch, for instance. I yield to none in my admiration of Mrs. Newmarch's descriptive gifts, but I feel it is a great pity some of the composers did not read Mrs. Newmarch's notes before they wrote their music—especially Russian and descriptive composers. "All the strange visions of night have vanished," writes Mrs. Newmarch in a note to a novelty of Bagrinovsky's, but it is one of the most reprehensible lapses on the part of any composer that Bagrinovsky has quite overlooked this and allowed his "strange visions of night" to degenerate into common trespassers. This is where the Germans, painstaking as usual, score. Richard Strauss is always most careful to make his sheep bleat precisely where Mrs. Newmarch says they do—and this is not one of the least of his claims to greatness.

The next field of operations appeared to be the translations of the words of Songs, Arias, Recitatives, etc. It seemed a point of honour with the translator, or rather the selector of translations, that on

no account should the printed version be the same as that actually sung. It is possible that the object was to show the numerous French and Belgian visitors among us that such a great literary nation as ours had more than one translation of everything —which was, of course, highly patriotic and commendable ; on the other hand, the idea may have been that anyone offended by the words or the literary style of the printed translation would be sure to be mollified by the singer's use of other words, or *vice versa*.

At any rate, there was no panic at work in those programmes ; and evidently the fiery harangues of Messrs. Holbrooke and de Lara during the early part of the war did not upset the management. For this they certainly deserve credit, coupled, in my case, with admiration for a highly developed art in the nomenclature of Wagner's Operas, though to anyone unfamiliar with the peculiar composition of Promenade audiences it would appear to be mere caprice. The Promenaders are a very mixed lot, but during the war they separated most conveniently into three classes :

(1) The real music lovers, who will not stay away if *The Mastersingers* is written *Die Meistersinger*.
(2) The people who know that *Die Meistersinger* is German but do not know that *The Mastersingers* is the translation.
(3) The people who do not know German when they see it, and think *Götterdämmerung* is Russian.

Need one say more? Any intelligent person studying this classification would find in it the key to all the printed vagaries; but in order to make the classification comprehensive and all-embracing, I should mention that Class I. numbered a few cranks who would have stayed away if *Die Meistersinger* was written *The Mastersingers*.

Such, with a slight dilution of Wagner on Monday nights, were the trifling changes in the programmes; but there was another, more disturbing, feature. I don't mind having to listen to a fine artist playing on a Chappell piano. No one could be more anxious to see the native industry flourishing; I certainly desire to hear a first-rate Chappell before I die. But the fact that the one possible orchestral hall in London (for the Albert Hall is "impossible") is in the hands of a piano-making and song-selling firm might be a very real menace to the healthy musical life of the city, and calls for the greatest vigilance. It is possible that Messrs. Chappell may have lurking somewhere in their cellars an instrument which is the especial triumph of their factory and to which they listen before writing those confident advertisements which declare that "Chappell pianos cannot be excelled," etc. But does anybody believe this is really the case? Does one not take it for granted as necessary exaggeration? Are we not accustomed to it in a thousand things from soap to pills?

I often wonder what would happen if advertisers were a little more realistic and a little less romantic.

Suppose Messrs. Chappell left off advertising: "The finest English make, cannot be excelled for their exquisite tone, responsive touch, remarkable singing quality, and lasting durability;[1] endorsed and played by the greatest artists of the day." Supposing, I say, instead of this we read: "Chappell pianos, quite good in their way, an average English make, now up to the medium-class German, hope to do better if you support us; some leading professionals prefer other makes, but ours is quite a sound article." I personally believe that the public's appetite would be immensely whetted and that sales would go up. Perhaps I am merely wrong-headed, but I know that such an advertisement would appeal to me. Certainly no one believes the other rigmarole. Of course the morality of commerce is not the morality of art, and one can therefore understand people who have to do with both spheres getting somewhat confused. The vast numbers of inartistic—*i.e.* non-moral—ballads published by Messrs. Chappell & Co. have evidently been "passed" by the management along with the advertisements, so that often it is a little difficult to tell the songs from the advertisements; though, no doubt, it is possible. But they have the same spiritual father—a sort of father one can imagine saying in a Wells novel, "Oh, it's orl right—I'm orl right—wot's the matter with me?" "Nothing!" is the swift reply from a thousand suburban homes.

[1] This is where we surpass the Germans, in "*lasting* durability"; their pianos are merely durable.

"Nothing!" echo Messrs. Chappell, looking at their yearly balance. "Everything!" groans the true patriot, refusing to be comforted by the New Queen's Hall Light Orchestra and by the improved English of their recent advertisements.

Nevertheless it must be said in justice to Messrs. Chappell & Co. that seven years have now passed since they took control of the Promenades and the Queen's Hall Symphony Concerts and there has been no lowering of the standard of music performed. There has been even an improvement in the quality of the vocalists engaged, which is a really astonishing achievement. Also Messrs. Chappell & Co. have always taken criticism in good part, and have never attempted to influence or boycott those critics who have dared to point out their imperfections.

XIII

AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION

DURING the first Promenade season of the war it occurred suddenly to Mr. Newman that it would be a good idea to have a "Russian Night"; the idea was at once put into action and a vast audience resulted. The items in the programme were just the usual ones that are played again and again during every London season. And the night was not even "Russian," it was "Tschaikovsky"; and Tschaikovsky, to vary Cui's famous reference to Rubinstein, is more of a Russian who composed than a Russian composer. Why a little Tschaikovsky should be so much less attractive than a whole meal of Tschaikovsky can only be explained on the all-or-nothing principle, which almost divides England into Teetotallers and Drunkards. However, the idea having been so successful, it was natural that Mr. Newman should next think of a "French Night." But, alas, it became only too clear that it had been Tschaikovsky and not Russia that drew the multitude, and as no musical man of business has ever had the sense to

provide France with a Tschaikovsky, the audience was medicore.

France has only had one great emotional composer of the elemental type—the type that has a universal appeal, and he was not a Frenchman; yet if he had been carefully "boomed" and "worked" as Tschaikovsky has been, concert-givers would have held in him another trump card. The idea that "good wine needs no bush" is only relevant to connoisseurs; for the rest of the public it is the bush that matters. Seeing that the musical connoisseurs of London at any one concert will only about half fill the top circle of the Queen's Hall, it can be readily understood that concerts will always depend financially on the Richard Wagners, the Tschaikovskys, and the Richard Strausses, who draw less as musicians than as wizards or freaks—their only rival being the twentieth-century custom of the young man taking his girl out one night a week, which fills the Queen's Hall on a Saturday night, be the programme good, bad, or indifferent. Just as in Pasteboard Opera the competent impresario will hoodwink Scotland Yard into sending a squad of police to guard his prima donna's imitation diamonds and fill the picture press with photographs of the lady strung round with ropes of paste pearls and dropping tears of disillusionment on bunches of letters containing the false promises of kings and princes, so in the world of music must the enterprising management reveal to the open-mouthed public Byronic, Demoniacal, Theo-

phistic, or merely Cacophonous details, hints, and legends sufficient to excite the *blasé* and astonish the innocent, and by this means bring to his own many a great composer who otherwise would languish in comparative obscurity.

Having given a Russian night and a French night, Mr. Newman came up to Sir Henry a day or two later, looking very gloomy, and said: "We'll have to have an Italian night." "What!" said Sir Henry, turning nearly purple. "Can't be helped," continued Mr. Newman. "I hear that the Italian Ambassador is hourly expecting the announcement." "My God!" exclaimed Sir Henry, falling into a deck chair in his garden. "That means Puccini, if not Tosti—to think I should ever come to this!" "Well, there's no way out of it," replied Mr. Newman; "it never once occurred to me, but, of course, it's simply inevitable after having a Russian and a French night. The Italian Government would complain, and then Asquith would complain." "Asquith!" ejaculated Sir Henry, "Asquith! What has he composed? I don't know him." "I mean the Prime Minister." "Oh! the politician!" "Yes, he could censor us," added Mr. Newman. Sir Henry groaned, then he jumped up suddenly. "And what about Serbia? Shall we have to have a Serbian night and a Montenegrin night?—and what about all those Zulu chiefs or those Nigerian fellows——" "Oh, we'll stop at Italy," asserted Mr. Newman firmly. "Stop at Italy!" murmured

Sir Henry feebly. "Isn't that where the British public has stopped in spite of my twenty years' work?"

But Sir Henry was too pessimistic. I went to that concert out of curiosity, but the British public has really been educated to some purpose—it did not bite. A poor house listened dolefully to a lugubrious and everlasting Fantasia on Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and only a few maidens from bygone ages sighed intermittently during Mascagni's Intermezzo. During those dreary two hours it came upon me gradually that the Futurists were much-maligned and long-suffering men. I can now appreciate better what it must be to live musically in the land of Leoncavallo, Mascagni, and Puccini. I understood all that Marinetti and his followers must have endured.

XIV

MAX REGER

HAD it not been for the war, the death of Max Reger, at the early age of forty-three, would have occasioned a great deal more comment than appeared in our Press, where the tendency was to dismiss him as a composer of comparatively small account. Reger, however, who for many years has been next to Richard Strauss, the greatest living German composer, was very far from being of small account. Like Strauss, Reger came from Bavaria, where he was born in 1873; he was thus about seven years younger than either Strauss or Debussy. In spite of this, the number and length of his compositions are truly prodigious, going well into the second hundred opus number. What this means we can better judge from the fact that Elgar, who is over sixty, is still a good way off his first hundred. This wealth of production is characteristic, for the first and last impression one gets of the man is size; even in Germany he was noted as a colossal beer-drinker. He was, in fact, a man after Mr. Chesterton's heart, about six feet tall and very heavily built. The face was

striking, being square and heavy, with a magnificent brow, but at the same time mobile, sensitive, and expressive; the most remarkable feature, however, was the full, over-hanging, and somewhat imperious mouth. The whole man gave an impression of enormous vitality. Reger is mostly represented as being a return to Bach—"half a Bach redivivus," Mottl once called him; but although it is true that a great mass of his music is contrapuntal and that he revels in colossal fugues, that his technical capacity is astounding and a nightmare to executants, for whom he has small mercy, yet he is by no means a mere "half-Bach" or a mere juggler of colossal intellectual power. He has written over two hundred songs, never heard in England, some of which, even in the opinion of strong anti-Regerites, are exceedingly beautiful (*e.g.* "Anmutiger Vertrag," "Flieder Wennlichter Mondenschein," "Traum durch die Dämmerung," "Mädchenlied," "Der Mond glüht," etc.); and even in his stiffest works there are simple and lucid beauties obvious to anyone at a first hearing.

On the other hand, a great deal of his work is sour and forbidding and of terrifying length. His violin concerto (Op. 101), for instance, takes an hour and two minutes to play, and would crack the skulls of most of our violinists; but in Germany it is played from memory by great violinists like Henri Marteau, and it is recorded to the eternal honour of a violinist named Schmuller that after playing it for a year he succeeded in reducing the

time to fifty-eight minutes. This work was denounced on its first performance as "a crime against the violin"; but this is an exaggeration, for few men knew as well as Reger how to write for the violin. I can testify to his Sonatas for Violin Alone being wonderful polyphonic creations worthy of the artists who can play them. These, again, are never heard here, where we still consume the senseless trickery of Wieniawski and the sugar-candies of Kreisler. In chamber music, Reger has written a melodious and easily grasped Trio in E minor and two Quartets that I know of—the D minor quartet (Op. 74) and the E flat quartet (Op. 109). The famous violinist Hans Wessely once said that a well-known Berlin quartet had been studying the D minor quartet for two years and were not ready to play it yet, so there is some excuse for the London String Quartet never doing it. When played at the Dortmund festival it had had sixty-four rehearsals—let us admire this stiff-necked obstinacy! I heard both these quartets in Munich and remember being considerably impressed; though at that time I was a violent Strauss partisan and used to declare in the pleasant manner of students that Reger was a gigantic idiot. Of late years Reger has written more orchestral work, but the same characteristics are present. The Piano Concerto appeared in 1911 and took fifty-one minutes to play; it was hailed as "the most unpopular composition that has appeared for years," which of itself is an achievement in Germany and

prejudices one in its favour. I have never heard it, I am sorry to say, nor the *Sinfonietta*, the title of which is one of Reger's jokes, for it has the full four movements of a Symphony and takes forty minutes to play; it was of this work that Herr Siegfried Ochs, a noted conductor, said on its production in Berlin: "Give me the lucid old masters—like Richard Strauss."

However, I heard Reger conduct in person a later work for Orchestra, a Suite inspired by the pictures of Arnold Böcklin; and this was lucidity itself and full of striking and beautiful writing, showing the influence of Debussy and the modern French school very strongly. This was in 1913–14, when Reger was conductor of the Meiningen ducal orchestra which von Bülow and Brahms made famous. Always a remarkable-looking man, Reger had by then got immensely stout and was unable to stand up to conduct, having a colossal arm-chair specially built for him. As a conductor he was undemonstrative but very alert and decisive; the playing of the band was remarkable for precision and clarity. For Chorus and Orchestra Reger has written two remarkably fine works: *Gesang der Verklärten* (Op. 71) and *Die Nonnen* (Op. 112). Neither, as far as I am aware, has been given in England. The former on its first production was described as the most original and daring thing in music, and from the entry of the chorus so unprecedentedly complicated and harsh, not to say ugly, that Strauss's "Domestic Symphony"

which followed was hailed as a great relief in the way of beauty and simplicity. "Yet," said one critic, "there is no denying the astonishing mastery and power displayed." I have no room to write of Reger's organ music, which is colossal in quantity, length, and construction, but "astonishing mastery and power" is the term which most justly sums up Reger's compositions. In intellectual construction, in architectonics, he displays the most astounding capacity; there is nothing sentimental, feeble, or merely emotional about Reger's music; on the contrary, it is mostly harsh, sober, massive, and forbidding, bristling with accidentals and eternally modulating. It is probable that much of it will outlast far more popular work, for it is very far from being mere dry academic note-spinning, although he is generally more intent on building up wonderful tonal fabrics than in conveying moods or sensations. That the former is capable of giving the more solid gratification few people will deny. It is too much to hope that we shall hear for a long time yet any of Reger's work. I happened one week during the war to go into a well-known music publisher's, and I was struck by the way Russia dominated the place. Portraits of Russian composers and portraits of Russian artists adorned the walls; all the Germans had been sent down into the cellars to await Mr. Hughes's return to Australia; and there, neglected and despised, lay, no doubt, a few heaps of Reger's music ousted from the upper air by the brilliant mass of com-

posers whose names have the good fortune to begin with " Pop " or end with " off " (in other ways an unlucky conjunction). I do not grumble at this. I am not anti-Russian ; I am in music pro-Russian, pro-German, pro-French and even pro-English. It is very amusing to listen to deluded people who imagine that we can get English music by keeping it free from foreign influence. We can either assimilate foreign influence or we cannot ; if we cannot, we are certainly not vigorous enough to produce national music ; we should be like an Englishman who, if he ate a German sausage, became a German. To bar our front door to strangers is only a confession of impotence.

XV

THE LONDON CHORAL SOCIETY

EVERY now and then some hoary body which one had imagined was mouldering in the grave pops up its antique head and barks at us. This is what the London Choral Society did at the Queen's Hall on Easter Wednesday, 1921, although perhaps one should not use the word "bark" in connexion with such a body of respectable singers. For six years during which the musical life of London has been active there has been no sign of the London Choral Society, and this perhaps is not surprising when one considers that choral singers are not paid as orchestral players are, but in some societies even pay for the privilege of being allowed to sing. The concert on the 23rd of March was advertised as the second of the first season since the war. The programme consisted of Beethoven's *Mount of Olives* and his *Mass in D*, and when one comes to ask oneself why such a commonplace, unattractive work as *The Mount of Olives* was chosen, one puts one's finger on the weakness of this Society. The plain truth is that the London Choral Society is an anachronism and that its supporters are

anachronisms—in particular the gentleman who stood up in the dress circle during the final chorus, thinking, no doubt, since it began with the word "Hallelujah," that he was listening to *The Messiah*. One felt that *The Mount of Olives* would never have been chosen if the performance had not taken place in Holy Week, just as one felt that the audience (except the critics) would never have been there if the performance had not been in Holy Week. As I sat and watched those ghosts of the nineteenth century each clasping its soiled and tattered vocal score, an indescribable pathos assailed me. Most of them, no doubt, had seen the funeral of Queen Victoria and were (unconsciously) only waiting for their own. Meanwhile, poor pathetic remnants of a period that believed not in Beethoven but in Lent, they sat listening not to the music but to the words of their faith, and it was nothing to them that a soloist belonging to a newer generation—unable to believe her engagement to sing in *The Mount of Olives* with the London Choral Society was anything but a dream—had not turned up. The atmosphere affected even the critics, one of whom was moved to write: "There is some great music in it, notably in the 'Gloria.'" There is, of course, no "Gloria" in *The Mount of Olives*. Would that there was! But the atmosphere of the London Choral Society's audience is so depressing, and *The Mount of Olives* so tedious, that one would end by taking a sudden loud tap on the drum for a Gloria.

The Mount of Olives is one of Beethoven's worst

works. It was written about the same time as his Second Symphony—that is to say, about 1802—and now it sounds exactly like all the bad oratorios that followed it during the nineteenth century, culminating in Stainer's *Crucifixion*. It sounds incredible that Sir John Stainer could have written a work comparable to anything written by Beethoven, but it is true, nevertheless. One can only explain it by saying that Beethoven must have known by second sight, by intuition or what you will, the sort of audience he would get for his work during the hundred years to follow. It would have been waste to have written good music for people who were only going to use it as a pretext for dragging their offspring and their dependents to a pompous display of formal piety. It is terrible to imagine the hundreds of thousands of children who in England throughout the nineteenth century were driven off to churches and to halls to be tortured by the public exercise of a frenzied religious bigotry which henceforth would be linked inseparably in their minds with music. This was the only sort of music they ever heard, and if its context was sufficient to paralyse the genius of Beethoven, it is obvious that it was more than enough to crush the budding musical instinct of the average child. Having known in my youth a pious grandfather who on Sundays locked away all the daily papers, including *Pick-me-up* (a paper with a certain resemblance to *La Vie Parisienne*), a grandfather who thought nothing of committing adultery but would have fainted if one had played tennis on a Sunday ;

a grandfather who thought "The Lost Chord" was sacred music and that a Beethoven Symphony on a Sunday would have sent us to the devil—having known these things, as I say, I am filled with contempt and loathing for the sort of audience that goes to hear *The Mount of Olives* during Holy Week and goes to hear no other music during the rest of the year.

If the London Choral Society cannot obtain an audience on the musical value of its performances it does not deserve one. If it thinks to make up for poor musicianship by performances at Christmas and Easter, in order to catch the rapidly diminishing rump of the nineteenth century, both it and its conductor, Mr. Arthur Fagge, will soon exist in a still more attenuated form. At present, even the name of the London Choral Society seems wrong; such is the effect of evil associations. What a contrast with this sham musical religious sentiment inherited from the nineteenth century is the real goodness and beauty of the work of the Oriana Madrigal Society and Mr. Kennedy Scott's newly formed Philharmonic Choir. Here we have the real spirit of the twentieth century in its musical expression, the spirit that animates the best of our younger artists, poets, and musicians. When we heard the Philharmonic Choir eleven days later, the hall was packed with an enthusiastic audience of live people. Hundreds were turned away through lack of accommodation. We were moved as it is only in the power of the greatest art to move us, although we did

not think the performance perfect. What was the reason of this difference ? It was the same hall. It was the same orchestra. The fact that it was Bach's *Mass* instead of Beethoven's was just an accident, but a different spirit animates conductor, choir, orchestra, and audience. It is a spirit of faith—faith in good music and a desire for perfection in its performance. There is present no cant, no humbug, no " religion." There may be here and there in the audience a certain amount of intellectual snobbishness, but what can we expect ? This is not a perfect world.

XVI

A NOTE ON OPERA

THE tradition that Wagner reformed opera is firmly established, but exceedingly vulnerable. Suppose we ask to be shown the fruit of the reform, what shall we be confronted with? Blank silence, I should imagine, from any discriminating judge; but from others a list of post-Wagnerian operas, of which the best known are *La Bohème*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Louise*, *Pagliacci*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*; the best, *Mefistofele* and *Hansel and Gretel*, and the latest, *The Boatswain's Mate*. Of all these operas one may say truthfully that the more Wagnerian they are the worse they are. There is scarcely one of them as good as Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, or *William Tell*, or Cherubini's *Water Carrier*, or Glück's *Orpheus*, not to bring into the comparison Weber or Mozart. This may only mean that these later composers are less naturally gifted than the men before Wagner; but it is strange that the decline in talent should be so general, and it is still stranger that it should reach its nadir just where the Wagnerian influence is most marked, and it becomes more than strange

when we can plot the same curve in the work of one man. For example, the best of Puccini's works is *La Bohème*, which is far less Wagnerian than the much inferior operas *Manon Lescaut* and *The Girl of the Golden West*. Personally, I think such operas as *Manon Lescaut*, *The Boatswain's Mate*, and *Louise* a great decline on Bellini's *Sonnambula* or Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment* or Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. It is not the fashion to think this. For some reason or other, to make a singer thunder in a heavy, melodramatic, declamatory style "The soup is ready," as Charpentier does, is thought far superior to vocalizing it with a trill and a flourish—though, as a matter of fact, the old Italian composers did not introduce soup into their operas. They ignored table-laying, feeding, and washing-up, just as we still ignore various operations of the toilet; though, no doubt, some "reformer" will come along one day and insist on putting them all in, and his followers will then sneer at Charpentier and Miss Smyth as shallow and artificial—which is a horrible prospect for them.

One authority has defined Wagner's reform as "getting rid of the parasitic vocal phrase and restoring drama to its proper position of superiority." I accept this definition, but consider it a definition of degeneration, not of reform. Let us consider the first part of the definition—the "parasitic vocal phrase." Now this, if it means anything, means the phrase that exists for its own sake; that is to

say, the phrase that exists for its own musical value and not merely as a means of telling you that the soup is ready—information which does not interest you in the least, seeing there is no prospect of your getting up on to the stage and eating it. I submit, with due reverence to all the pundits who are against me on this point, that it is precisely the "parasitic vocal phrase"—and not the soup—that you want when you go to hear opera. Similarly, the notion that it is a reform to restore the drama to its position of superiority in opera fills me with astonishment. To restore the drama to its position of superiority over the creases in Sir George Alexander's [1] trousers seems to me to have been a legitimate aspiration of the theatre; but to make the drama predominate in the opera-house over the music is equivalent to making Sir George Alexander's trousers predominate over the drama. The extraordinary dullness of *The Boatswain's Mate* and *Louise* is due to their lack of musical interest, just as the extraordinary attraction of Wagner's operas is due entirely to the music. To this day I have never properly understood what the Ring cycle is about. The only readable book on the subject I ever came across was Mr. Shaw's *Perfect Wagnerite*, which was very amusing and as relevant as any other. For Wagner was essentially a symphonist, and his so-called operas are programme

[1] No one has such trousers nowadays, and it is a bitter commentary on popular fame that this will probably be the last time Sir George Alexander's name will appear in print.

symphonies with vocal parts, the artistic successors not of *Fidelio*, *The Magic Flute*, or *Don Giovanni*, but of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony—of which he was so fond. His real achievement was to enlarge the bounds of orchestral expression; opera he left where he found it. He did not even invent recitative, or, what is more to the point, employ it with originality. Peri's opera *Euridice*, composed before 1600, was written entirely in recitative purposely to obtain dramatic truth at the expense of melody, and, later, in the seventeenth century, the reformers like Scarlatti *seeking higher musical perfection* found themselves compelled to sacrifice this so-called dramatic truth. I say "so-called" because no drama set to music is dramatically true whether the whole drama unfolds on a pedal point, undulates in a recitative, or pirouettes and loops the loop in an aria. There is one way, and one way only, of keeping the drama dramatically true, and that is to abandon the music altogether. It must be thought unfortunate that this simple course has not commended itself to the majority of opera composers. What has misled theoretical reformers and many practical musicians is the conception of opera as drama set to music. Under the influence of this, as I think profound, misconception, the composer takes his drama from a penny novelette or a six-shilling novel, and tries to make an opera of it by letting the actors declaim in a recitative as near to speech as possible, so as not to weaken the fragile naturalism of the story, while

his musical powers are limited to weaving a background more or less congruous, but always superfluous. It is impossible to call such opera a musical form; it is no more a musical form than arranging an appropriate background of pot-palms and flowers to the speeches of Cabinet Ministers would be an art form.

But if opera is not drama set to music, as the followers of Wagner imagine, and if it is not a method of displaying the human voice, as the early nineteenth-century Italians believed, what is it? It is, I think, a form of programme music, and its value as a separate musical form is that it enables the musician to express ideas as distinct from sensations. Compare Strauss's tone-poem *Till Eulenspiel* with a Brahms symphony. To enjoy the former demands a knowledge of its programme as it deals with ideas; in fact, the music and the programme make one composition; but for a Brahms symphony, which is purely sensuous, a programme is superfluous. This explains why all the best operas are comic, with a tendency to satire and fantasy — these being intellectual qualities. To use opera solely as a vehicle of emotion is to misuse the form, and needlessly to cramp your power of expression.

And by emotion I do not mean grief or joy, or pain or fear, but aural emotion. I do not think, for instance, that the rôle of music is to express lamentations for children sunk in the *Lusitania*. Such a lament for strings by an English composer

has been much praised, but I can find no merit in it. To me it is only a quiet, unaggressive noise, from which I gather that the composer felt sad, and, for the moment, gentle. That is to say, it merely conveys information and expresses grief just as tears do, and is simply a roundabout way of the composer coming on to the platform, ejaculating *Lusitania*, with a sob, snivelling into a handkerchief, and retiring. The reason it is nothing more is that it has not been conceived aurally. A parallel from another art may make this clearer. The Tate Gallery used to be full of pictures conceived ethically or anecdotally and not visually. Pictures of doctors sitting by bedsides, of lovers quarrelling, of incredibly melancholy individuals "breaking the news." These canvases were the production of painters working emotionally; they had no more to do with visual consciousness than business "memos" or maps; in fact, their authors were not visually conscious at all, they were simply clerks who had learned to draw and paint instead of to stenograph and typewrite, and their works were as suitable to hang upon walls as invoices and short stories. The painter is really the musician of the eye, and some understanding of this is apparent in modern art; but much modern music is still in the problem-picture stage.

The modern development of opera ought to be a development from abstract to concrete music as we get everywhere else. Thus, whereas a singer in past opera simply upheld a strand of the abstract

musical pattern, the singer of the new opera—the opera to correspond with the tone-poems of Strauss and Debussy—ought to be a point of colour, a musical idea or gesture in the conception or programme. We get an approach to this ideal in Stravinsky's use of the Ballet, which is practically dumb opera, but it points the way to a proper and really operatic use of the voice. Such an opera would be a logical development of the old abstract Italian opera where the voice was just one instrument the more. This does not mean that the voice is not to be treated entirely differently to any other instrument, for no instrument can be treated like another. To give the voice nothing but recitative is as absurd as to write melodies for the drum, yet we are asked to look upon this as a reform. The whole of modern opera, with its subordination of music to drama, the music being a growling commentary on the drama instead of being the drama itself, is a bastard production due more to Wagner's theories and the incapacity of his followers than to his practice. To write a genuine opera demands extraordinary intellectual endowment, finding expression naturally by music; this is asking something quite different from the purely musical endowment of men like Brahms and Mendelssohn. In fact, it is asking so much that without faith in the unlimited capacity of the human brain we might as well resign ourselves to the unmusical novels of Puccini, Charpentier, Miss Smyth, and the rest. In the meantime do not let us say that opera has

been reformed. It has simply ceased being a string of musical numbers written for their own sake and to show the beauty of the human voice, and become a melodrama floated on a current of mostly irrelevant noise. The two essentials of any reform are that the music should predominate, and that it should be used to illuminate ideas and human character.

XVII

THE TECHNIQUE OF OPERA

ANYONE interested in the technique of Opera—and, frankly, very few operas have any other interest—will find considerable pleasure in comparing *Samson and Delilah* and Bizet's *Fair Maid of Perth* with *Tristan and Isolda* *The Fair Maid of Perth* strikes one at first as very old-fashioned ; it has the set pieces, duets, quartets, and arias of its old Italian models, its dramatic situations are very feebly and conventionally handled in the music, even when compared with the work of inferior composers like Puccini, Leoncavallo, or Charpentier, and are, of course, utterly insignificant by the side of Wagner's dramatic moments ; but how restful and pleasing it is to listen to a composer who says nothing when he has nothing to say, who does not think it incumbent on him to fill up every page of his score with a mass of "tonage"—if I may coin a word for verbiage in music! The Mozartian method of merely striking a chord to support any explanation in recitative necessary to the story has gone the way of many other good things. It was still used by Bizet, and by Saint-

Säens in *Samson and Delilah*, but no man calling himself "modern"—that is, no man handcuffed to the Wagnerian school—would think of stooping to such simplicity. It is as much a rule of thumb with him not to do this as it was with his predecessors to do it, and it is indeed characteristic of second-hand minds that they should think the mere substitution of one formula for another to be progress.

It is, of course, the intellectual craving for unity or "form" which has driven creative musicians like Wagner to weave a continuous musical whole from the first to the last bar of their score, but the more successful they are the more necessarily the work takes on the nature of a symphonic poem with an explanatory dramatic background. This I maintain is what *Tristan and Isolda* mainly is, and therefore, incidentally, most productions are on the wrong lines, inasmuch as the drama is brought too far into the foreground, and the "too solid" flesh and too apparent actions of its protagonists (in the setting of the first scene, above all) get in the way of the music and of the whole imaginative effect. We should not see the action or actors too plainly. Colour, atmosphere, and scenery should be used to support the music and put the drama into such a perspective as to give the whole opera the unity of magic or a legend. In most productions the drama is so in the foreground that the music at times even sounds like padding, so slow is the action and so long-winded some of the personages, King Mark in particular. *Tristan and Isolda* is frequently

considered to be the most perfect in form of all operas, but it has no real unity since from a musical point of view the drama is a disintegrating and distorting factor. The music cannot take its natural shape, it cannot be built up along its own lines of growth, the operation of its own architectonic laws is thwarted by the necessities of the plot. Consequently, even if we relegate the action to the background, we are bound to find the music shapeless, with great masses of padding, while, on the other hand, if we concentrate on the drama (which is the normal way) the music is frequently superfluous and tedious. The dilemma which confronts the operatic composer is, shall the music be a background to the story or the story a background to the music? Wagner's solution was the former in theory, and he wove his leading motives into a sort of dim tapestry hung behind the actors of the drama, with the result that we get long stretches of dull drama enlivened by little flashes in the tapestry; and at the critical moments when the action wakes up, the musical figures woven in the tapestry suddenly stand out in a blaze of colour, completely take the stage, and shoulder the actors off the scene. This sudden self-assertion of the music, which forms the only live and valuable part of Wagner's operas, is alone fatal to their artistic unity, and it is actually quite as justifiable just to drop into the theatre to hear the third act of *Tristan* as it was to drop in to *Lucia di Lammermoor* merely to hear Melba sing the mad scene.

The Fair Maid of Perth is written from the opposite point of view, that the story is merely an excuse for the music, and the proof that this, though not the only alternative, is a better and more fruitful theory can be found in the fact that no one but Wagner has ever succeeded in writing a tolerable opera with the other theory, and that as operas (and apart from occasional moments of extraordinary genius) even Wagner's musical prose-poems are less interesting and enjoyable on the stage than *Samson and Delilah*—the work of a man of no genius, but of talent and taste. Wagner and his followers have sacrificed the musical opportunities offered by set pieces, trios, quartets, arias, ballets, and choruses, and have gained nothing thereby but a realism which is purely illusory. Nothing is more certain than that musicians will not continue to consent to being crippled in this way. Bizet's *Fair Maid of Perth*, with all its weaknesses, is worth a dozen of *Madame Butterfly* or *Louise*. It is, to begin with, sincere and spontaneous, and if its lyric quality is occasionally very feeble and sickly, it is also now and then, as in the Intermezzo and the Ballet, delightful—and it is lyricism above all which needs bringing back to opera. Some critics seem to think there are plenty of English composers as good as Bizet. I am certain there are English composers as good as and better than Charpentier; but if they begin to write operas, it is to be hoped that they will model their work on Mozart, Bizet, and Rimsky-Korsakov, not on Wagner. This

question of form is all-important. The duet, the trio, the quartet, the aria, the chorus, and the ballet are the accumulated musical resources evolved by centuries of effort. The modern composer should not throw them all away because one musician of great genius happened as a rule to be incapable of using them, since they did not suit his sensation-loving, unintellectual, non-operatic mind. The only sort of unity that is possible or desirable in opera is the unity of the underlying idea and of the musical style. To endeavour to produce a melodic recitative closely imitating the inflexions of human speech is the most horrible quackery that ever imposed itself on a gullible world. There is more operatic quality in *Petroushka* than in *Tristan and Isolda*, and Stravinsky can be derived back from Mozart, where you will find the same power of detachment, the same sense of character in melody and harmony, the same intellectuality. These qualities are the very essence of opera, and a further proof of this contention can be found in the fact that of all Wagner's works the only one that for its full enjoyment and appreciation needs to be performed on the stage, and not merely played and sung in the concert hall, is *Die Meistersinger*. *Die Meistersinger* is the only opera Wagner ever wrote.

XVIII

NOTES ON THREE OPERAS

IT is doubtful whether many operas will long survive being sung in English. There is a fatuity in sounds as well as in words, though we are for the most part less sensitive to the former; but the combination of the two is, I should think, irresistible. However, the happy publishers of men like Puccini need not be unduly terrified, as it is only possible to hear, on an average, one word in five, and so a desirable obscurity still envelops the meaning of many operatic creations. When this obscurity lifts, the result is distinctly depressing; though it has sometimes a comic side, if you are in a mood to see it. When *Othello* was sung in Italian it might have taken a sensitive ear to tell how insincere and superficial was the Hymn of Hate which closes the second act, and is sung by Othello and Iago kneeling; but its first performance in English will reveal at once that element of unsoundness and hollow swagger which Verdi never quite grew out of. *Othello* also suffers from the fact that the plot makes great demands on our credulity. Shakespeare himself is guilty of one atrocity which

mars the last act of the opera when Desdemona, having been smothered, comes to life again, and then is so inconsiderate as to die without apparent reason. Then anybody but a hopeless fool would have seen through the sort of Iago we get on the stage in a second—and we must remember that Othello is supposed to be a successful general, that is to say, a hard-headed man able to outwit his enemies. Mr. Frederick Austin has been praised for playing an uncommonly unexaggerated Iago, but this only shows how bad our operatic traditions are, for Mr. Austin's Iago is still a thousand times too obviously cunning and diabolical. The Iagos of this world do not go about with "behold this scheming devil" written in every gesture and expression! Is it done for fear the family circle, inexperienced in villains, may mistake Iago for the hero's best friend? One feels ultimately, however, that Verdi conceived his Iago on these grotesque lines, and that therefore the drama is hopeless, and we had better resign ourselves to being amused instead of being moved: only we cannot dismiss *Othello* as we can, for instance, dismiss *The Girl of the Golden West*, because Verdi was capable now and then of real intense music, and in the last act of *Othello* he reaches it, to our extreme pleasure. We are then able to look back more tolerantly and recognize the unusual force and vigour often shown by Verdi in the previous three acts.

The Girl of the Golden West is a good entertain-

ment, which is more than I can say for Puccini's other operas. It ought to have been a great success. Musically it is beyond the pale: it has no feeling or imagination, nothing but the shallowest artifice, the most transparent trickery. Yet if trickery, it is not the most offensive trickery. Puccini does not besmirch everybody and everything with treacle, and though it is as easy to be sloppy in music as in words, and Minnie's Bible-class gives him a great opportunity, he never descends to the depths of *The Professor's Love Story*. What is so striking is the complete absence of sincerity in the music. It is all gesture, with a hand on the heart and an eye on the box-office. There is a note on the programme by Puccini's publishers repeating the old tag that the music is a "continuous commentary on the action." This orchestral commentary habit has become the worst feature in modern opera. It has degenerated into a mere formula to save original thinking, and its main use now seems to be to palm off long stretches of dullness by continually whisking before your ears one or two of what the composer thinks to be his best tunes. The first two acts of *Louise* offer one of the worst examples of this trick, but I also defy anyone to tell me the meaning of the orchestral commentary in the first act of *The Girl of the Golden West* during the dialogue between the Sheriff and Minnie. The orchestra would be just as well employed in shuffling their chairs about. The play is an amusing melodrama well performed.

The Sheriff well-acted is a delightful creation—the sort of thing Dickens might have done if he had written cowboy tales. Then there is the cowboy who reads aloud a letter from home: "Your poor old grandmother is no more—Whisky!" And the heroine who sits on a barrel full of gold at the end of the first act and murmurs, "Oh, Hell!" as the curtain falls. All this is quite charming, and no doubt there is more of it if we could hear it. The libretto makes no large demands on our simplicity. All the material for a plain, poignant tale is there, and a composer of genius could make it real and intensely moving. But these Italian composers have no heart and no imagination; they simply thump their chests and are full of gesticulations.

Moussorgsky's *Boris Godounov* is a striking contrast. Transparent sincerity and emotional force combine to make this a magnificent, stimulating work, though I never expect to hear these choruses sung with the verve and violence I should like. In the scene of the Revolt, Moussorgsky soars utterly beyond Verdi, Puccini, Charpentier, and all other gesticulators. It is an opera that makes us feel how much more we English have in common with the Russian people than with any other nation in Europe

XIX

THE MAGIC FLUTE

AS a manifestation of pure genius *The Magic Flute* would be hard to beat. It is the joy of all musicians and the despair of all composers. From the first note of the overture to the final fall of the curtain there is not a dull moment, not an uninspired bar. It is a haven of delight in which one lives, withdrawn from care and depression, for a few hours. To produce this exquisite masterpiece with excellence at any time is a genuine public benefit which, judging from the crowded houses it often draws, is realized by many. *The Magic Flute* is classic in the sense that it has that serene and magical beauty of perfection marred by no strain of technique unable to cope with vision, of disordered imagination, of unequal senses and faculties discordantly yoked. It has the effortless ease, the limpid spontaneity, the serene and heavenly beauty of a Greek temple under a blue Attic sky. There is shade in that temple as well as the transparent sunshine in which it is bathed, but the shade is luminous ; and it is beautiful as grief is beautiful, as death is beautiful in that wonderfully proportioned way of vision we have

learned to call Greek. Somewhere in it a note of sadness is touched, how or where is imperceptible, but the result is serene and perfect, as is that figure of Death which is sculptured on a column of the Temple of Diana in the British Museum, a figure so lovely that it brings tears to the eyes of the beholder.

The libretto has been the butt of many wits. But I like it. A " tissue of absurdities " has no repulsion for me. I do not want a reason for every exit, nor do I mind the terrible but anæmic serpent dying and the hero swooning at the sight of three lovely ladies so that they can sing a trio undisturbed. What is irritating to me is a logic that draws attention to itself and then breaks down, or a chromolithographic Italian love-tale like *Cavalleria Rusticana* or *Pagliacci*, in which hearts are torn to tatters with shrieks of calico. The libretto of *The Magic Flute* is not unreasonable, it is simply beyond reason. What could be more preposterous than Papageno, the bird-catcher ; yet his every note and action is a delight. Love, adventure, humour, danger, trial, religion, success, and joy are combined in a wholly inconsequent manner, but still they are combined. It has passages of whimsicality, seriousness, and sense ; and, though incredible and perhaps intolerable without the music, yet it gave Mozart enough to put his whole soul into it and lift it to a work of art of the most lofty and imperishable beauty.

XX

LOUISE

ONE of the things which make me almost lose heart is the immense popularity of *Louise*. *Louise* at Covent Garden, in French, with a pantomime transformation scene of the dawn in Paris at the foot of Montmartre, had a certain atmosphere of strangeness and suspected naughtiness which one would expect to attract a large class; but *Louise* in English, and without the transformation scene, surely it would be unpardonable if that should go down! However, down it goes, while immeasurably superior works such as *Otello* and *The Seraglio* have been failures, both in London and in the provinces. The reason did not lie in the production, for *Otello* was one of the finest productions Sir Thomas Beecham had given us; the ensemble was superb, every part was well cast, and the setting was a genuine artistic effort. *The Seraglio* was also a beautiful production. The setting of *Louise*, on the other hand, was just a piece of hack-work by a few carpenters and scene-painters, though there was no fault to find with the cast. Apart from the story there is

only one other element to be reckoned with—and it is one that many opera-goers seem habitually to leave out of account—namely, the music.

In opera, to my mind, the music is the thing. This may be an old-fashioned idea, like the idea that poetry must be judged as poetry and not accepted as mystical and marvellous because it tells us some such fat platitude as that the earth is round, or makes some unintelligible statement such as "I am the cosine of the angle of God." Now the music of *Louise* is bosh, it is absolute bunkum; that is a fair and unexaggerated statement. I would ask anyone who cannot believe this to go to a performance and close his eyes and listen intently to the music, and ask himself honestly, does it ever mean anything, does it ever delight, or heighten or quicken any emotion whatsoever? Of course, one cannot expect the non-musician to perceive the mass of threadbare Wagnerian *clichés*, the utter lack of any note personal to Charpentier, but the complete absence of musical "ear" in the composer can surely be felt. There is absolutely nothing for the musician. One hears every note coming half an hour ahead and wishes despairingly that something would go wrong and stop it. The harmonies not only belong to the old, soiled stock-in-trade of two dead generations, but are dished out mechanically, empty of all feeling. Further, there is not a tune from beginning to end. Some people will say, "Oh, but Charpentier was not trying to write tunes, he was following Wagner

and writing a logical music-drama." Now, this is a fallacy. Wagner's operas are stuffed with magnificent tunes, and Wagner's best work was done when he forgot all about his theories and let his drama stand still while he poured out a flood of sensuous music in a mood of lyrical exaltation. There are huge chunks of dullness in Wagner's operas, while his melodic recitative seems as if it would go on for ever, but we forgive these because of the lyrical bits—and remember Wagner had got so much stamina that sometimes, as in *Tristan and Isolda*, the lyrical bit lasts throughout a whole act. But the music of *Louise* is one vast chunk of dullness, so that one prays that somebody, preferably a large tenor, may fall through the drum or into the tuba.

I have racked my brains to discover the reason of the popularity of *Louise*, and I have come to the conclusion that the attraction is the tale, which is the pleasing story of a girl flying from her home to her lover. The theme in itself is nothing; everything depends on how Charpentier, who wrote his own libretto, looks at it; and unfortunately he regards it without passion, without the fantastic and bitter hate which we are awaiting some genius to express in music, and even without tenderness. In short, *Louise* is the musical counterpart of such books as *The Christian*. The music fluctuates between dullness and insincere melodrama; that is why I called it bunkum.

I am convinced from observation that the music

plays quite a secondary part in the appreciation of the majority of our opera audiences. Even people who are genuine music-lovers, and in the habit of listening to absolute music, seem to forget all about it when they go to the opera. They are looking for a tale or a moral. Well, there may be something in *Louise* for the moralist, the social worker, and the parent of adolescents. There may be people who don't know that girls should have lovers. But to the people who want to hear music, I say emphatically, stop away; and if you do go, and find you like it, put on sackcloth and ashes and listen to Beethoven and Brahms and Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov and Wagner and Delius and Arthur Sullivan and "The Girl I left Behind Me," and sing tunes to yourself every morning in your bath until you get to feel what is wrong with *Louise*, until half an hour of that miserable tootling, which modern instruction in harmony and orchestration would enable Lord Curzon or Lord Northcliffe to write, drives you crazy; for then, and then only, will you be a man who *hears*, and not a mere receptacle of stray sounds.

XXI

THE VILLAGE ROMEO AND JULIET

A WELL-KNOWN critic, writing of the first real production by Sir Thomas Beecham at Covent Garden of Mr. Delius's *Village Romeo and Juliet*, remarked: "The whole opera is on the shoulders of the two lovers. The librettist has made it impossible for them to be dramatic, but the singers did all that was possible." In other words, then, they did nothing? Would that it had been so! The opinion I have quoted is more or less the opinion one most frequently hears on the subject of Mr. Delius's opera, but it seems to me to spring from a very limited conception of the possibilities of the operatic form. Is it not curious that a critic, having observed that a librettist had made it impossible for his characters to be "dramatic," should nevertheless praise the singers for an attempt to fly in the face of the author's intentions, an attempt which he says is doomed to failure, for it is "impossible"? Obviously, by "impossible" he can only mean *impossible without turning the author's libretto into something different*, and for this he is prepared to praise the singers, since he evidently considers the

author to be absolutely wrong in not wanting his work to be "dramatic." So we see that our critic has a preconceived idea of what a librettist should do, and the fact that Mr. Delius deliberately chose a libretto that was not what—in the opinion of our critic—a libretto ought to be, gives him no food for reflection. He simply thinks that Mr. Delius does not know what he is about.

One might accept such a conclusion in the case of a young and inexperienced composer, but even then it would be rash. With Mr. Delius it is more than rash. When a mature composer chooses a libretto, he chooses it (unless he is suffering from softening of the brain) because it appeals to his genius, because it offers scope to his own especial and peculiar gifts. He does not want a libretto that would satisfy Mr. William Archer as "well-constructed," or Mr. Bernard Shaw as "sensible," or the Bishop of London as "moral," or Lord Northcliffe as "popular." He will take a libretto that is none of these things, a libretto that flies in the face of all the supposed rules as to what a libretto ought to be, provided only that it appeals to his musical imagination and gives him a chance to do what he wants to do. Therefore, it is, I contend, absolute folly to criticize a libretto before a composer has worked on it, for it is like criticizing an architect from a pile of bricks before the house is built. An opera is not a libretto set to music; the libretto bears rather the same relation to the completed opera that words do to a poem. The words in themselves may appear to be good words or they

may appear to be bad words, they may be euphonious or ugly; but we can form no idea from them alone whether the poem will be good or bad, or even very definitely what the poem will be like.

Of course, I am far from saying that the composer can give to a libretto any twist he pleases or that he can easily find anything like his ideal libretto. What I am saying is that the right way to criticize the libretto of an opera is to point out where it frustrated the composer's efforts, where it failed to give him a *raison d'être* for the effect he wanted, where, in short, it did not bear the strain which he put upon it. To criticize it for being something the composer, obviously, never wanted it to be, something he had deliberately avoided, is quite irrelevant and foolish; but it is the criticism one most commonly hears of a libretto for the simple reason that critics seem to have only one ideal, and that is the "dramatic" libretto.

The Village Romeo and Juliet is a romantic love-story from the German of Gottfried Keller. There are two romantic farmers who encroach on a dead man's land. There is an enigmatic, sorrowful, menacing figure called The Black Fiddler. There are two children who grow up to be lovers. There is a country fair at a small town in the mountains. There is Paradise Valley. Although the opera has only three acts, there are seven scenes. It has a strange, dreamy quality which is no doubt partly what appealed to Mr. Delius, for it has certainly stimulated him to write some of his finest music.

The lovers are strangely passive. This is to my mind a beautiful characteristic. They pass through the scenes of the opera like the children of a dream. It is the love of mediæval times rather than love as operatic composers know it—that love which, like a malady of the flesh, took hold of the patient so that he forgot all the duties of this life and went his way with eyes that saw nothing of the world around him. How ridiculous it is to complain that this story is not dramatic! One might as well complain of Burgundy for not sparkling. The fact is, our operatic public has got so used to fat tenors brandishing cardboard swords, and to daggers, poison, and revolvers, and to abductions, seductions, and desertions, that they do not know what to make of such a strange, inert, flowerless passion as that of Sali and Vrenchen. Unfortunately, the libretto owes more to Mr. Delius than it does to its author, who has failed to give us the feeling that the tragedy of the lovers was inevitable. The music convinces us while we are in the theatre, but what we can hear of the text rather disillusions us, for it does not really belong to the same world. It is not, in fact, a story that satisfies the imagination; there is a touch of early nineteenth century romantic falsity about it. It will just bear the interpretation Mr. Delius gives it, and that is, unfortunately, all a composer can expect to find unless he is his own librettist. But it would be difficult to overpraise the music. The reticence and briefness of the love-passages between Sali and Vrenchen are extraordinarily refreshing, and in

sensitiveness of outline and in harmonic colouring the music of modern Italian opera with its crude and blatant emotionalism will not bear comparison with it. *The Village Romeo and Juliet* may not become a very popular work, but it is an opera that will wear better than three-fourths of the operas that are popular to-day, although it will always depend more than most on the way it is produced.

XXII

THE CRITIC

PERHAPS the highest praise one can give Sir Charles Stanford's opera is to say that the one Irishman has added to the wit of the other; that is, that the opera makes an even more enjoyable evening's entertainment than the play itself. The libretto, which has been arranged by Mr. L. Cairns James and the composer, follows Sheridan's text literally, and is more important than the music to the resulting opera. But the music is adequate, and in parts charming, both musically and in its appropriateness to the spirit of the text. One of the chief examples of both intrinsic musical merit and subtle appreciation of the words is the really delightful piece of recitative sung by Tilburina on her first entrance—that inimitable catalogue of the flowers which greet the rising sun. Sir Charles Stanford has struck exactly the right note in this, and I fancy the most ardent Sheridan enthusiast would be obliged to admit that the piquancy of Tilburina's monologue had been considerably enhanced. In fact, in my opinion, the tragedy rehearsed goes very much better as an opera

rehearsed, if only because the modern opera to which the public is accustomed—the opera of Puccini, Gounod, Verdi, and others—is even more nonsensical and idiotic than the average modern drama. Indeed, there is no need to confine these epithets to Puccini, Verdi, and Gounod, as we had an excellent example of operatic absurdity given us on the night of the first performance of *The Critic* in Debussy's *L'Enfant Prodigue,* which is as conventional and ridiculous and tediously uninteresting as the most devoted lover of Italian opera could wish. The musician can detect in the orchestral writing some characteristics of the Debussy to be; nevertheless, no one could dream that the man who wrote *L'Enfant Prodigue* at twenty-two would write *Pelléas et Mélisande* at forty; and *Pelléas et Mélisande* is still far ahead of the public taste in opera, while Maeterlinck has long been quite popular. Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton, for instance, are much funnier operatically than they would be dramatically, and Sir Charles Stanford has everywhere shown his ability to rise to his opportunities. Very little of his effect is got by actual musical quotations, the resources of which are very limited, as nine out of every ten persons in the audience will never notice them; he relies chiefly on imitation of the usual operatic methods. Little, if any, exaggeration is needed, and the satire is got more through the ensemble than by the music itself. There is nothing, for instance, musically like Moussorgsky's delineation

of the rich and the poor Jew, where the actual musical phrases themselves convey an impression of the two men as vividly as any words or pencil could do. One of the best things is the chorus of Leicester and the garrison of Tilbury Fort, "We are—all resolved—to conquer, or be free," where by merely following the well-established Italian model of an operatic chorus a supremely comic effect is achieved. Another fine thing is the ensuing prayer to Mars. The whole of this section is a delicious satire on "last-ditchers," and mere patriotic sound and fury, but I am doubtful how a popular audience would take it, though its success on the first night was immense.

The duet between Whiskerandos and Tilburina, and the latter's mad scene in white satin are altogether admirable. It is to be regretted that in the adaptation of the play as a libretto, the first scene of *The Critic*, including Sir Fretful Plagiary, has been cut out; because the opera is none too long, and, apart from this omission, we have in it the whole virtue of Sheridan's play, and it would have been safe to assert that had we got our National Repertory Theatre, it would be as opera that most of us would wish to see *The Critic*.

XXIII

CÉSAR FRANCK

FRANCK, once my favourite composer, died in 1890; and Ambroise Thomas, the Director of the Paris Conservatoire, straightway took to his bed to avoid having to go to the funeral of a colleague who was such a nonentity. For Franck was a nonentity; he had been organist at St. Clothilde for thirty-two years, he gave lessons from eight in the morning till nine at night, he had written music that no one ever seemed to want to hear, and he had been made in his old age Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur for his painstaking and meritorious punctuality as Professor of the Organ at the Paris Conservatoire. He was married and had children; he was a good Catholic and a prodigious worker, who had to rise every morning at five in order to find a couple of hours free for composition. In fact, he was the very model of what a good *bourgeois* should be, but never is. One blemish only could be discovered in the pure respectability of the man—he was a Catholic, but a Catholic whom rumour compared to Fra Angelico

and Pascal. As a composer Franck simply did not exist, the world knew him not ; and when his friends obtained a performance of his Symphony on February 17, 1889, Gounod was heard to pronounce in a loud, authoritative voice at its conclusion : "*C'est l'affirmation de l'impuissance poussée jusqu'au dogme,*" and the public let it rest at that. As for Franck, on those rare occasions when his works were performed, he followed the music in his thought, withdrawn into an inner world of his imagination, and he never seemed to be aware either of the coldness of the public or of the faults and shortcomings of the players which were generally conspicuous. Accustomed to the fussiness of most composers over the renderings of their masterpieces, some will find this not only extraordinary, but incredible.

There is only one book on César Franck in English, and that is the translation of his life by d'Indy ; but d'Indy is a man with a bee in his bonnet, and is more intent on trying to prove the religious orthodoxy of the Master than on revealing his baffling personality. How baffling it is I shall now try to show. D. G. Mason, the American critic, describes Franck as "a devout mystic, an obscure and saintly man." "In the presence of this devout mystic the sounds of cities and peoples fade away and we are alone with the soul and God." Saint-Saëns describes his work as "*musique cathédralesque.*" Arthur Coquard

compares him with Fra Angelico, and refers to his "celestial melodies, his harmonic originality." Others compare him to Shakespeare, Bach, Maeterlinck, Amiel, and a mediæval monk. Some swear to his orthodoxy, others to his partiality to Renan. There is universal testimony to his powerful intellect and equal testimony to his touching *naïveté*. One French writer says: "*Il avait une intelligence ouverte à tout, un besoin de nouveauté et d'investigation que rien ne pouvait satisfaire, neanmoins il était par caractère un homme d'un autre age.*" He was an infant prodigy who composed all his great music after he was fifty, and there is the genuine anecdote told by his son, who, on being disturbed one evening by constant bursts of laughter from his father while he was reading, asked him what the book was that entertained him so much; to which Franck replied: "It's Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* I find it very amusing."

Now when we come to his music we find, instead of the simple saint, the genial *bourgeois* husband, the sympathetic friend and teacher—the "Pater Seraphicus" of his pupils—a passionate violence, an almost blasphemous audacity, a sort of titanic defiance of God and life, and an agony of soul the like of which has never before been expressed in literature, music, or art. Nothing is more remarkable, nothing is more intriguing, nothing is more startling in all the biographies of men than the abysmal gloom, the

truly soul-rending despair expressed in the music of this man whose life was one long smiling devotion to a daily round of humdrum duties. The truth is that Franck was one of the most astounding personalities in the history of the world; he was heroic and epic, and beside him even the strong-willed Wagner seems like a puling child. Unlike Wagner, he abused no one, had no contempt for the world which ignored him, but was tolerant, broad-minded, sympathetic, and could stand absolutely alone. The thoughts that lurked within that wonderful head—that head of which Jacques Chevalier writes: "*Voyez ce masque formidable ramassée dans sa vision intérieure, vision douloureuse car elle contracte les sourcils et la bouche mais vision colossale—alors vous direz qu'il y a l'infini dans ce crâne*"—did not permit a man to be troubled as to whether his fellow-men thought his music good or bad. He stood above such petty considerations. In the regions in which he breathed there were other things to trouble a man's soul, and he has spoken of those things in the most passionate accents in which it has yet been given to any man to speak. No one has ever conceived such idiosyncratic themes; they are mostly short phrases of indescribable character, but they are like nothing else in music. There is something superhuman and supernatural about them. In fact, there is an intensity, an exaltation in his music that is hardly of this world. Franck has been rightly declared one of the three great

founders of modern France; but the revolution he accomplished in French music was a spiritual one. After Franck, men could no longer breathe in the atmosphere of Gounod, Ambroise Thomas, Delibes, and the rest of the chiffon-and-sugar school; nevertheless, he remains an isolated phenomenon, he is not in the line of present-day development—except in harmony, where he was an innovator. The most characteristic modern French composers, such as Debussy and Ravel, owe practically nothing to him; and the reason is that modern music is becoming more and more sensuous and concrete, more and more susceptible to colour, attitude, and what we may call atmosphere, and is greatly inspired by nature, from the Water Wagtails of Cyril Scott to the floating clouds, the falling rain, the wind-dimmed pools reflected in the beautiful mirror-music of Debussy. Franck had none of this susceptibility; he was passionate and intense, but not sensuous; in this respect he resembles Carlyle, Ibsen, and Bach, and differs from Keats and Wagner. It is in the painter El Greco, however, that we find his closest affinity. One cannot imagine El Greco taking any interest in nature; he seems wholly oblivious to it, and a dry consuming fire of the will seems to burn in his pictures, just as it burns in Franck's music. This is no doubt the reason why Franck has been called mediæval and is what distinguishes him from Beethoven, whom he much resembles in moral passion and intrinsic ardour,

but with the difference that Beethoven had a pagan joy in beauty and a lively feeling for nature. Franck will never become popular; he is for the few whose spiritual ardour surpasses any capacity for sensuous enjoyment and whose sojourn on this earth must therefore inevitably be tortured and full of bitter unrest.

XXIV

A CONCERT AT THE FRONT

IN a small town in France, a few miles behind the front line, turning out of the square past the military policeman with a rifle slung across his shoulder, who regulates the traffic with the calm precision of a London constable, you will find, a few hundred yards down a narrow paved road, the most important building for many miles around. It is a large, ramshackle contrivance knocked together by Tommies from odds and ends of timber and pieces of fibrous roofing. Dark, patched, and almost flapping like a hideous scarecrow in the wind, it will hold about eight hundred men, and is called, with the Army's mordant humour, " The Pavilion."

One would have expected the British or Australian soldier to have borrowed one of the commoner music-hall names and called it The Empire or The Palace, but he happened to hit upon " Pavilion " and so set the passer-by thinking of Arthurian legends, of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, of the silk-tasselled pavilions of Saladin, while confronting him with a

real war pavilion as fantastic and extraordinary as that of any romance. A few yards up the road is a large white board with the inscription in black:—

"Forward of this point is the Ever-ready Gas Zone.
Box respirators must always be carried,"

and almost opposite, protruding from an uneasy-looking house, is a roughly scrawled sign-board under the name Veuve Marie Colbert, which mutters pathetically into the street, "Eggs, postcards, and chips." Day and night the guns are rumbling, sometimes broken and absent-mindedly, sometimes in a determined roar; and the sky will often be dotted with the bursts of "Archies," scattering round passing Boche machines; but no matter what the strafing or what the situation, at a certain hour soldiers will troop in from all around and fill the Pavilion to its uttermost.

The price of admission is one franc for officers and sergeants and fifty centimes for other ranks. Entering, you find four rows reserved for officers and the rest of the building crammed with "other ranks"; you will even see heads sticking through the doors when there is no more room for bodies. Sitting down, you face a stage with real footlights, and behind you is a cinema lantern, both being supplied from a dynamo in an adjoining sea of mud. In front of the stage, squeezed as closely together as possible, is a military band. You feel an intense joy of anticipation tingling through the building.

The faces of the bandsmen and the audience are aglow with pleasure when a thick-set man stands up, puts his cornet to his mouth, and the evening begins with a rousing march. The band plays fairly well, but with such enormous gusto as to obliterate all defects and paralyse with a crushing offensive all criticism in the audience. The show is very similar in scheme to that given by pierrot troupes at seaside towns in the summers before the war, only incomprehensibly better. But perhaps its superiority lies in the stupendous verve with which everything is done. Again and again and again the performers triumph over their material. They are nine soldiers in the permanent rôles of one pianist, two girls, and six men, and they always open with some chorus, generally from an old London musical comedy. Then follow two ragtime duets, one sentimental song with lights lowered—generally about parting from some girl; then a comic song, as a rule curiously antique, such as "I want to sing in Opera"; then a recitation or dramatic scene of their own concoction—most excellently done this, as a rule; then a roster of verses *ad lib.* to a sort of comic chorus such as "The Night that the Old Cow died," or "When we sat upon the Baby on the Shore." This is the item where all the gibes at quartermaster-sergeants and men in "cushy" jobs and innumerable jokes are got off, typical couplets being:

> And the Australians stood at attention,
> As an officer passed by.

Solemn Chorus : The night that the old cow died.
And an anti-aircraft gun
Got its first shot on a Hun
The night that, etc.

The two jokes that brought down the house when I was last there were the remark of one of the girls, extraordinarily well made-up, who comes in simpering, and flashing an engagement ring, and says, " I'm engaged to a soldier." " Oh, what is he ? " " He's an officer in the Y.M.C.A." ; and the reply of a jovial captain who comes jauntily on to the stage, and meeting a depressed subaltern, slaps him on the back, with " Hullo ! old man, where are you now ? " " I'm attached to the R.F.C. Where are you ? " " Oh, I'm attached to the base."

The most popular item on each occasion was the ragtime duet, really excellently sung, which was always clapped, whistled, and cheered to the echo. This should be comforting to those who maintain, like myself, that the natural uncultivated taste in music is better than the large commercial product which the public is induced to consume—for there is no doubt whatever that most ragtimes, with their syncopation, vivid rhythms, and frequently attractive modulations, are the best music that many people hear, and far superior to what singers of ragtime would probably refer to as " high-class songs," meaning the sort of unmusical twaddle you may see advertised any Saturday in the *Daily Telegraph.*

The life of the Army is, however, not conducive to subtlety. Excitement and sentiment are the two poles on which these entertainments hang successfully. Wagner and the composer of "If you were the only Boy in the World" are the types of musicians who could always be sure of a British soldier's welcome. The bands seem to play in a continuous switchback between the "1812" Overture and "The Rosary"—that is to say, there is always either a tremendous row or something "to cry over." Even so the commonplace, stupid scoring of the music that mostly gets played by brass bands is far beneath the level of the audience, which is quick to appreciate anything simple and striking.

XXV

STRAVINSKY

STRAVINSKY is the young man's god, and it must be granted that in music the young men have generally been right in their judgment. To-day, however, things are changed considerably, the public runs after anything that can claim to be weird and novel, and as soon as anything weirder and more novel can be found the less weird is precipitately abandoned. It is a disastrous atmosphere for the real artist, who is apt unconsciously, if he have originality, to force the pace, to overstrain his powers instead of letting them develop naturally. I feel that something of this sort has happened to Stravinsky, whose music I have always admired. *The Nightingale* is, undoubtedly, a fine conception. It is the nearest approach to what I have always conceived the operatic form to be that we have ever had; it is far more of a true opera than any of the long-winded musical melodramas of Richard Wagner. *The Nightingale* is a highly fantastic, imaginative work; we never have that sense of discomfort from the discrepancy between the real and the represented

which haunts all the operas of Wagner and the Wagnerians, and this is because Stravinsky has understood the peculiar scope of the theatre for an imaginative reality that has nothing to do with this world as it appears in ordinary life. Compare the chant of the Fisherman in the woodland grove by the sea, with which *The Nightingale* begins and closes, with one of the most beautiful effects Wagner ever got—the piping of the Shepherd in the third act of *Tristan*—and you will notice first of all that the sea in Wagner's opera is the sea of the coast of Brittany ; you can in imagination hear its breakers rolling on the coast at the foot of Tristan's castle and, presently, the vessel which bears Isolde will come in sight. But the sea by that grove where the Fisherman sings is no sea that ever was on earth, nor do you know if its breakers roll, or if it be transparent and solid as glass. Again, the piping of the Shepherd, sad and haunting though it be, is yet warm and human, and suggestive of all the warm breathing things of earth, of the Shepherd's human longing and of the Shepherd's mate ; but the Fisherman's song is abstract, void, remote. We are in a world like the worlds of the astronomers, those worlds that rotate beyond our vision in a space which we conceive in our minds, intangible, yet vivid with a reality as startling as that of Euclid. Now this is something new in music, and it is in this direction that music is going to develop immeasurably. Certainly the future for Opera lies in its suitability as a medium for this kind of

imagination, although we have to face the fact that far more people are emotionally sympathetic than imaginative, and that therefore the emotional operas will always probably have the stronger appeal.

Now, it must be said on the other hand that Stravinsky has not advanced anything like so far in the mastery of the expression of his ideas as Wagner. This fact is generally concealed from most people by the novelty of his ideas; but to me Stravinsky technically is a babe by the side of Wagner, in spite of the foolish adulation of his followers, who are largely people incapable of much discrimination and who are always talking of Stravinsky's marvellous technique, when the truth is that Stravinsky's technique, far from being marvellous—which Wagner's was—is painfully inadequate to his really remarkable ideas. To anyone with a little imagination it is distressing to listen to parts of *The Nightingale*, and hear again and again the music fail to get the effect that was in the composer's mind. In listening to *Parsifal*, on the contrary, it is quite the opposite. I have little innate sympathy with Wagner's music. I hardly ever want to hear it; often I go unwillingly; but always when I do go I am confounded, swept away, and completely overwhelmed by that colossal genius for expression—and expression, often, of the most tawdry rubbish. So impressed am I by Wagner's genius that when it comes to judging *Parsifal* I am torn by conflicting opinions. Like

the average audience I am deeply moved, *spell-bound*; but an instinct struggles within me that there is something wrong, that this music is at the opposite pole to the truly spiritual; it is too silky, too rich, and that even Amfortas' pain is a luxury to the flesh. Whatever its defects, however, it is never insincere, and that ultimately is the source of its strength.

It is a matter of extreme grief to the more fantastic of Stravinsky's Paris admirers that his ballets *L'Oiseau de Feu* and *Petroushka* should have had such popular success in London. They therefore pretend to despise these works, and talk impressively in mysterious phrases of his more recent "Three Pieces for Clarinet"—pieces in which Stravinsky has managed to avoid expressing anything at all with wonderful skill. We have it, however, on the authority of M. Ansermet—the well-known Geneva conductor who has lectured on Stravinsky's music—that there is no essential difference between the Stravinsky of those earlier works and the later Stravinsky. M. Ansermet is quite right, and he is also sound when he claims that Stravinsky's music is to be heard and judged from a purely musical point of view. Unfortunately, no one yet knows what a "purely musical point of view" is. Can we listen to the *Tannhäuser* Overture from a purely musical point of view? We may begin by determining to hear it as pure music. We will allow a certain purely musical charm to the "figures" in which the strings weave the attractions of the

Venusberg, but most men will find that they cannot sit through the *Tannhäuser* Overture without getting excited. Is this state produced purely by the action of the music on one's physical sense, or by the idea of conflict got from the programme and represented musically? I think it is got by a mixture of both, for it must be remembered that when this overture was first heard and its meaning was unfamiliar, it was thought to be a disgusting noise. I feel that the people who thought this were right. To me it is a disgusting noise, and the fact that it has made me so excited that I grip the arms of my seat while listening to it does not make it any the less disgusting *as noise.* But if we are to accept this demand of certain musicians that we shall judge all music purely *as noise* (which is about what M. Ansermet means by his "purely musical point of view") Stravinsky will not fare very well, for *as noise* much of his music is frankly unendurable. There is, for example, less that is gratifying to the ear in his *Cats' Cradle Songs* than there is in the *Tannhäuser* Overture. The modern composer who would come off best judging his music purely *as noise* would be Debussy—all of whose noises were delicious. I am not so sure that Brahms would not be his most serious competitor, for Brahms, who is often regarded as an austere, intellectual composer, was to my mind one of the most sensuous of all. At its best his music gratifies the ear far more than Beethoven's. It does this by a combination of harmonic and melodic lusciousness, and

it is also noticeable that his rhythmic effects are sensuously gratifying and not exciting. His fondness for syncopation, which is the most sensuous element in rhythm, is an obvious mark of this quality. Brahms is also short-winded, and never produces that nervous exhilaration that comes from rhythmic virtuosity—of which Beethoven is such a master. This rhythmic virtuosity is one of the surest ways of producing excitement. The Dancing Dervishes can produce a high state of spiritual exaltation by its means at will, and it is curious that those two composers who command this rhythmic virtuosity to the highest degree, Bach and Beethoven, should have always been recognized as the most spiritual and exalted.

Are we then to believe that moral grandeur is nothing but rhythmic virtuosity? Certainly not. Stravinsky possesses a rhythmic virtuosity that is truly remarkable. It is associated, no doubt, in *Le Sacre du Printemps* with a spiritualistic ritual that has some affinity with that of the Dancing Dervishes. Here we have the ritual dance conceived in its primitive religious function, but great as was my admiration for *Le Sacre du Printemps* (I say "was," for I have not heard or seen the music for years), I do not think anyone would claim for it that it struck that note of self-forgetful passion so characteristic of Bach and Beethoven. Therefore, although we can say that rhythmic virtuosity is invariably stimulating, we have to acknowledge that it varies in expression. My contention is that it is the

expression, not the stimulation, that is important. This is what I mean when I decry "emotional music." "Emotional" music is rich in stimulation but poor in expression, just as a dog-fight or a boxing-match is. You have only to compare the overture to *Tannhäuser* with the *Meistersinger* Quintet or the *Preislied* to find how very much more expressive the *Meistersinger* music is. The greatness of Mozart, a composer whom everybody agrees to be perfect—*sans peur et sans reproche*—consists in his attaining such extraordinary expressiveness with so little sense-stimulation. It is because Stravinsky seems to be either consciously or unconsciously striving after expressiveness rather than "emotionalism" that I have felt that in opera he relates back to Mozart. But of course he is more "literary" than Mozart was, and he is an intellectual moving in a society which is more widely sophisticated than was the environment of Mozart. There are also times when Stravinsky is a pure caricaturist, a rather cynical Dickens, and, like nearly all modern artists, he is much too consciously clever. I cannot help feeling that it is unfortunate for Stravinsky that he has become so cosmopolitan; he seems to be withering in too closely confined and artificial an atmosphere. The soldier of his *Tale of the Soldier* is the sort of figure that is intelligible only to a highly sophisticated people. The average soldier would rightly not recognize himself in that intellectual abstraction, that fantastic figure of a caricaturing imagination. It may

be objected that the imagination always caricatures, and in the sense that the creative imagination throws a strange light upon all objects, this is true ; but it may be such a light as leaves them mere shallow silhouettes making fantastic and meaningless gestures, or it may be a light that, while not taking anything away from them as men and women, shows us an unsuspected background and gives them an added significance. It seems to me that on the whole Stravinsky fails to enrich us in this way. He amuses us, he entertains us, he is enlarging the means of expression in music, and he is intellectually interesting, but, though perhaps imaginative and not merely fanciful, he is not profoundly expressive. I doubt if he will ever meet here with that frenzied enthusiasm with which he is acclaimed in Paris. We can be trusted with our heads if not with our hearts, while our Latin friends are only too apt to get drunk on their own intelligence.

XXVI

A MUSICAL PHILOSOPHY

A POET'S ideas on poetry are always interesting, and although the ideas of a musician on music have not necessarily an equal attractiveness, since he has to express himself in a medium unrelated to his own, yet they must always have some value. In Mr. Cyril Scott's book [1] there is an amount of sound sense which is not alone due to his first-hand acquaintance with his subject. Mr. Scott *thinks*, and if some of his conclusions are to me thoroughly repulsive they are at least his own ideas, not platitudes or fashionable jargon, which is what most general writing on music usually amounts to.

Mr. Scott believes in Romanticism as opposed to Classicism and Futurism, and, accepting his definition, it is not difficult to agree with him. The difference between a Romanticist and a Futurist he neatly puts as the difference between one who desires newness in all directions and one who desires it in only one direction; the former gives

[1] *The Philosophy of Modernism (in its connexion with Music).* Kegan Paul. 1s. 6d. net.

us a new beauty, but the latter merely a deformity. That is to say, the Romantic artist will create a new type of beauty as the Madonna of da Vinci and the old women of Rembrandt were new, while the Futurist will give us a Madonna in triangles, which is new only in its angularity. Wagner, for example, he says, invented new structure, new harmonies, new polyphony, and new melody; he was novel in *all* directions, whereas the novelty of the musical Futurists is wholly harmonic, and they have discarded all other factors; therefore their work, not being consistently novel, is merely deformed. Mr. Scott elsewhere compares a Classicist (and I believe this comparison has been used before) to a man who starts a walking tour determined to keep entirely to the roads; a Futurist to a man who determines to keep entirely off the roads; while the Romanticist is the man who follows or leaves the roads as he thinks fit.

These definitions are lacking in subtlety and ignore many ideas associated with the words Classic and Romantic, but they are clear and serve Mr. Scott's argument effectively. There is the same logical narrowness in Mr. Scott's chapter on Originality as a sense. The original mind, says Mr. Scott, feels discomfort when repetition is present, and this is what distinguishes him from the conventional mind which feels discomfort when repetition is absent; yet Mr. Scott is conscious of the inadequacy of this explanation of the original mind when he asks: "How is it that a music-lover can

listen with enjoyment many times to the Prelude to *Tristan and Isolda*, and yet only once, and without enjoyment, to a composition by one of Wagner's imitators?" As a matter of fact, absence of repetition is just as capable of causing tedium as repetition, and originality seems rather to be a manner of perception, of individuality of sensation, conveyed by the artist by a thousand indirect means, of which repetition itself may be one: as organic, in a word, like a flower, and not logical and mechanical as is the conception of repetition. Mr. Scott goes on to remark that Max Reger's imitation of profound work "glamoured" the German public into believing he was a Master, whereas, according to Mr. Scott's argument, this imitation should merely have produced boredom. My personal opinion is that Reger's work was highly individual; his pianoforte sketches, for instance, *Aus meinem Tagebuch*, are reminiscent of nobody, least of all Bach. Those works where the resemblance to Bach is as great as the resemblance of Charpentier's operas to Wagner's resemble Bach in the sense that their workmanship is so masterly that it might be mistaken for Bach's, whereas nobody could possibly imagine any of Charpentier's compositions to be by Wagner, unless a Wagner who had lost all his technical mastery and all his brilliant ideas.

It is only on the intellectual side that Reger resembled Bach, and on this point of intellectualism Mr. Scott makes the curious statement that there

is as much intellect to Wagner or Strauss as to Beethoven—curious, because I should have thought there was considerably more if, under intellectual we range the technical and constructive as distinct from the expressive. The superiority of Beethoven to Wagner has always been, to me, the greater depth and range of his personality. On the other hand, Mr. Scott clearly sees that the reason why many older composers fail to hold us is because, as he admirably puts it, they do not "afford sufficient material to occupy the mind." Mr. Scott's opinions on key-signature, rhythms, and form are becoming those of all intelligent musicians, but his chapter on the law of recurrence bristles with debatable points. I agree in the main with his strictures on musical criticism, and I will pass to his last chapter and its appendix entitled "The Hidden Aspects of Music." Mr. Scott makes an apparently innocent start by asking, Can music have a moral effect? He thinks it can. But though every lover of music knows that moral effect is produced directly by sounds combined by the brain of the musician, as it is by words and as it equally is by buildings in brick and stone and by faces of men and women, Mr. Scott sees a difficulty. "How," he says, "is the moral effect engendered when there are *no suggestionistic words to call it into being?*" (the italics are mine). This is, to me, a most amazing sentence, enough to make me really doubt whether Mr. Scott was conscious of its implications. But that he has wandered far from reality is shown in his next

sentence, which reads: "To answer this we must resort to the occult doctrines . . . the only means of helping us out of our difficulty. Now," Mr. Scott continues, "occult lore holds that man is not merely his physical body, but that interpenetrating that body are other subtler bodies, notably sensation-body, emotion-body, mental-body, intuition-body . . . and it is essential to add that these bodies are perceptible to the trained psychic though imperceptible to the ordinary man, the reason being that only the psychic has awakened the latent faculties of two glands in the brain, known as the pineal gland and the pituitary body." To this dull end does Mr. Scott's hard reasoning bring him! It is, indeed, well known that all men peculiarly susceptible to logic finish their days in the toils of some plausible, sense-proof system. Man has an earthly body; why not an astral body or even a jam-tart body? Why not? Can anybody say why not? Logic cannot deny their possibility. The twentieth-century man who has realized that anything is possible is truly in a pitiable plight. Before the pineal gland and the pituitary body he is undone. The only thing which could save him is ordinary gumption; and gumption in the twentieth century is not to be had. My heart bleeds for the poor defenceless Chestertonian "man in the street" confronted with these two psychic scoundrels, the pineal gland and the pituitary body. How they will rob him of his money and his common sense, and leave him wrapped in

black cloths embroidered with stars, muttering incantations and attending lectures at the Society of the Seven Great Girls of the Giddy East, so surrounded with auras that he cannot see his way out into the light of day! Mr. Scott proceeds to say that music has a very marked effect on this emotion-body, *alias* astral vehicle, which Mr. Scott says is composed of a very rare form of matter. Mr. Scott does not give us the name of this substance or its specific gravity; he tells us that it is dense and that it vibrates, altering its patterns as sand does on a plate rubbed by a violin-bow. Perhaps it is sand; anyhow, Mr. Scott, who has apparently seen it vibrate and form patterns, gives no rates of vibrations or diagrams of patterns, though he says: "I am not writing this book to uphold this or that conception of the universe, but to maintain that which I know to be true." Perhaps the reason for leaving us so in the dark may be found further on, where Mr. Scott writes: "Hardly ever in the history of the planet has the astral plane been in the state it now is." With the astral plane in such a state it is doubtless difficult to give exact descriptions of astral bodies, but, says Mr. Scott, "each of these planes (emotional, mental, intuitional) possesses its own distinctive species of music . . . the creative artist who can attune his mind to the highest of these planes (high in the sense of rapidity of vibration and not in the sense of spacial altitude) will succeed in producing the most elevated music." Here we have something definite. Great music,

according to Mr. Scott, is all a matter of rapidity of vibration; but has Mr. Scott forgotten that when the rate of vibration exceeds a certain figure, sound is imperceptible to human ears, so that the greatest music would be inaudible? That there is something in this I, afflicted by much hearing of Mr. Scott's contemporaries, will admit; but the logic of my experience would not satisfy Mr. Scott, who at this point definitely forsakes sanity and says: "Here again we are compelled to bring the psychic to our assistance, for it must be noted that every musical composition produces a thought-and-colour form in astral space, and according to that form and colour is to be gauged the spiritual value of the composition. If the preponderating colours be lilac, violet, blue, pink, yellow, and apple-green, combined with a form of lofty structure and vastness, then the work is one of intrinsic spiritual value . . . this method of gauging the spiritual value of art is only possible to him who has awakened the latent faculties of the pineal gland and pituitary body." "What can we glean from all this?" naïvely asks Mr. Scott. What, indeed! Turning to the Appendix for further enlightenment, we find Mr. Scott refusing to admit the association of colours with letters or tones from people who are not clairvoyants, as such people, not having gone through the necessary occult training, have imaginations far more active than their pineal glands. "Doctors have not hit upon the fact known to occultists (who have other scientific modes of

discovering things), that the pineal gland is the organ of psychic perception." It is sad to see a man of Mr. Scott's gifts led completely astray by so transparent a ruffian as the pineal gland. But there is comfort in finding that, according to Mr. Scott, Scriabin, some of whose works I intensely admire, has a different table of colour tones from the psychic one, and this, in Mr. Scott's words, "leads one to inquire . . . whether he was a reliable psychic or merely an imaginative artist." Well, well! After that I give Mr. Scott up as lost.

XXVII

THE BARREL-ORGAN IN THE RAIN

IT is not always in concert-halls that one has the most delightful musical experiences—hardly ever, some would even say; but I do not go so far as that. None the less, everyone who has any instinct for music will remember chance occasions when some song or instrumental air, heard almost accidentally, at some friend's house or—in some countries happier in this respect than our own—in the street has made a vivid impression that remains in the memory long after we have completely forgotten the recitals of an Elena Gerhardt, a Paderewski or a Kreisler.

I remember when a small boy that by some freak of fortune Paderewski came to my native town for the first time; my mother, wishing me to hear the famous pianist, procured me one seat at what appeared to me—and for our part of the world actually was—an enormous price. At any rate, I went alone, considerably affected by a consciousness that in being there at all I was rather going the pace. My seat was very near to the great man, and I remember how his hands trembled and how ner-

vously he clasped his knees. I also remember being more excited by his face than by his playing. He played first of all something by Bach—very likely a prelude and fugue—and then a Beethoven sonata; the rest of his programme I have forgotten. I do not think I was in the least moved by the music, but I returned home in a state of great excitement, and with a feeling that the concert was an event in my life that ought in some way to be celebrated, and that the presence of such a great man in our town must be brought to the notice of the inmates of the house who should not be allowed to pass away into sleep that night as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. Accordingly, I crept round to the back of the house and rummaged about in a shed until I had found—what is unknown in this country—an old kerosene tin. Taking a stick, I then marched into the house, beating the kerosene tin for all I was worth.

Now, musically, this event meant nothing, or very little, to me. I had been often far more touched by the very same music I had heard that night, played by amateurs; and although this experience of the contrast in the pleasure got from amateurs and from professionals is not true of orchestral concerts it is especially true of singers; for I do not remember ever hearing a professional singer before I was twenty who gave me any pleasure at all. I believe this is a common experience. It is due partly to the fact that in Anglo-Saxon (and to a lesser degree one might almost include German) countries

professional singers have no feeling for music whatever. They are simply the possessors of voices that have a marketable value, and they hire out their voices to concert-givers and to music publishers who need them to display their wares. They painfully acquire the minimum of technical musical knowledge necessary to enable them to sing an average ballad, or to take part in the half-dozen oratorios that are the staple musical diet of large masses of the population. They meet the average church organist on the common ground of complete insensibility and almost complete ignorance. They are far more illiterate than the ordinary dock-labourer, and their vanity has to be encountered to be believed. These wretches—I could name a lot of them if the law of libel permitted one such an artistic luxury—are even to this day, in spite of the great improvement that has taken place in England during the last ten or fifteen years, going up and down London, the provinces and the suburbs singing and spoiling the taste of the people. Their mainstay and sheet anchor is human sentimentality—the sentimentality of people who have had no opportunity to learn to appreciate finer qualities, but who, if left alone, would perhaps get out of the trough of sloppy emotionalism in which the modern urban population wallows.

For years, whatever singing I heard worth the hearing was from amateurs, and from them I heard, before I was eighteen, nearly all Schubert's songs and a great number of other German lieder, which,

until I went to Germany, I had never heard from the concert platform at all. One of my most pleasurable recollections is that of going suddenly into a drawing-room where some one was singing Schubert's "Wohin." It was one of those exquisite moments when we are by some happy combination of physical and spiritual health extraordinarily alive, and for both singer and listener the music, though familiar, had a beauty which they had never felt so intensely before. I have never heard "Wohin" sung since, either in public or by an amateur, but it is one of those melodies that I can always recall at will. The singing of amateurs is, as a whole, on a far higher level than professional singing, and in speaking of amateurs I am thinking of musical amateurs, not of the people who go to ballad concerts and buy the last song about roses to take home and strum upon the piano, although I should imagine that their interpretation by their own fireside had merits unknown to, and beyond the capacity of, the professional singer to whom the song was dedicated.

In Latin countries, however, the art of singing has never been lost by the people. I believe that of all European countries Spain is the most wonderful in this respect, but I have never been there, and English musicians as a whole know very little about the academic music of Spain and practically nothing about the popular music. As for ancient Spanish music, I do not think I am far wrong in saying that it is absolutely unknown—which is hardly surprising when we consider that 70 per cent. of the works

of our greatest and most famous English composer, Purcell, are unknown to musicians. His *Fairy Queen*, for instance, which was given at Cambridge in 1920, had not been performed since 1693. There are four volumes of his harpsichord works edited by Mr. William Barclay Squire—never played in public except by Mrs. Gordon Woodhouse—and I forget how many volumes the Purcell Society has published, all of which, however, appear to be totally ignored by the professional musicians who give concerts. However, that is by the way, and only illustrative of how immeasurably more important the amateur in music is than the concert-giving artist who is so much more in the limelight.

In Italy, of course, you may still hear plenty of good singing, even in the streets, and I dare say it would be possible to hear to-day, in parts of the country, many of those wonderful old Italian folk-songs which Madame Geni Sadero has spent her life collecting. Although I once walked through a large part of Central Italy it was never my good fortune to come across any old folk-songs, but I must confess that they were not the object of my tour. I do remember, however, going into an old wine-cellar with walls about fifteen feet thick in a small town in a little frequented part of the country and suddenly hearing, to my amazement, a gramophone burst forth into the waltz from *The Merry Widow*. The gramophone rang the death-knell of folk-song wherever it penetrated. There are musical critics—even good ones—who have a kindly word for the gramo-

phone; I know I shall join them one of these days but at present I have nothing for it but execration.

It was, however, in Italy that I received the most poignant musical impression of my life. A friend and I had arrived one day at Como, which we had never seen before. It was a most miserable day: one of those only too frequent days among the Italian lakes when the rain pours down as if it had set in for months. In utter wretchedness we walked along the comparatively deserted streets looking for a suitable restaurant, when suddenly, turning a corner, we heard a barrel-organ grinding out Lohengrin's Narration. It is a curiously beautiful melody, but at that moment, pouring out into the empty town among hills and buildings almost blotted from our sight with the steady, down-streaming rain, it was simply marvellous. If Richard Wagner had been there to hear it he would have wept. For it had become part of the earth; it was in some wholly inexplicable sense real—real with that reality that all good creative art has but which we cannot always feel, and that certainly we do not feel once at a hundred concerts.

XXVIII

DEBUSSY

CLAUDE ACHILLE DEBUSSY was born in 1862. He was, at his death, still in the early fifties, and a year or two older than Richard Strauss, who shared with him for many years a notoriety greater than any musician has enjoyed since Wagner. He was undoubtedly France's greatest living composer, though many good judges see in Maurice Ravel, a man ten years his junior, possibilities greater than any achievements of Debussy; but that is, literally, music of the future. Considering work actually done, Debussy has the stronger claim, and this apart from the question of originality, which has mainly an historical interest—for all composers of genius are equally original, but their originality is not equally obvious.

Debussy had undoubtedly musical genius of the very first class. *L'Après-midi d'un faune* is the work of a man who had, to the highest degree, the basic quality without which no man can be a great composer, that which makes a man a composer rather than a poet or a painter or a dramatist or a

philosopher, quite independently of his intellectual power and moral character. I can only crudely describe that quality by saying that the man in whom it exists gazes upon, understands, and communicates with the external world *through sound*. It is local in so far as it undoubtedly results from the structure of his brain, and being the most local it is the least, though it is the only indispensable, factor in the equipment of a great musician. No great musician, no second-rate musician, no musician worth listening to at all, has been without it in varying degrees. Wagner had it to as high a pitch as any man known to us ; it is what makes his music so electric, so overwhelming in its sensuous excitement ; but it could not make Wagner the greatest of all composers, and it could not even put Debussy among the great ; it left him with Chopin, whom he much resembles, not at all in his music, but in type. What was it, then, that Debussy, like Chopin, lacked, and Wagner had ? It was, I think there can be little doubt, intellectual power and character. Debussy gives us in his music winds, skies, water, and airy spaces, but never man ; the human element is entirely lacking. He does not even give us the emotions aroused by these natural things as Beethoven, Schubert, and Wagner do ; he merely gives us the sense of them. Not that I would belittle such a remarkable achievement. I would merely point to the distinction, and then draw attention to the fact that he wrote only one opera, and that did not deal with human beings at all,

but with Maeterlinckian sense-impressions labelled with human names. If one concedes that the function of art is to reveal the soul of man, it must be admitted that Debussy's is a singularly one-sided, incomplete, and inadequate revelation by the side of Wagner's, and this deficiency in humanity is what I mean when I say that Debussy lacked character. That he was Wagner's inferior in intellectual power hardly needs proving. It would, however, be wrong to say that Debussy was weak in construction; *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, and, on a smaller scale, many of his pianoforte works, are perfect in form, their outlines firm and inevitable. But it was a mastery of scanty material; there was none of that almost superhuman ease with which Wagner handled and shaped such swarms of ideas as would have reduced a lesser man to incoherence. The intellectual power of *Die Meistersinger* will be a source of joy when all interest in Wagner's operas is dead; it is his most enduring quality, and there is nothing like it in Debussy. Finally, we come to the deficiency which Debussy shared with Wagner, and which excludes both from the company of Bach and Beethoven; perhaps it is best summed up in the word love. Whatever we mean when we say that man is a spirit, the word stands for something as real, as unmistakable as a tree or a stone. The spirit glimmers faintly here and there in Wagner; it is not perceptible in Debussy, who might be not a man, but a metal harp with silver strings set in a lifeless plain and played on by the

winds. The sea blown on to the shore makes music as beautiful as Debussy's; *it*, as old Fitzgerald once said, has no soul, and it is the grandeur, the sublimity of the soul that makes the music of Beethoven and Bach so immeasurably greater than the music of Wagner and Debussy. There are many people, chiefly among professional musicians, who dislike and do not understand this judgment by spiritual values. They do not analyse the music they hear except harmonically—and harmonic originality is the passport to their favour. In discussing Debussy they argue continually as to whether he got his harmonic system, whole-tone scale, etc., from Rimsky-Korsakov, from Siam, from hearing bells, listening to birds, or hanging bits of metal on trees. But surely it is obvious that all creative artists get their inspiration from innumerable sources. Musicians express themselves through their ears, and their ears are forever acquiring material. Original ears, that is to say, ears sensitive to sound-combinations previous ears were deaf to, pick up original material: the material was always there, but no one before noticed it. *L'Après-midi d'un faune* has been written over twenty years, but no one has ever succeeded in writing anything equal to it, though nearly every musician can now hear that sort of harmony without having to get Debussy played to him. The reason why so much attention is paid to this point of harmonic originality is because it appears to offer an easy path to fame. The great

man is great, and, being unique, is original; the budding composer who is not a great man thinks he can stumble across some new system which will make him great, forgetting that the new lies abundantly around him all the time, that all there ever will be in harmony is here now, but that he can only discover what is in him to discover—which in most cases is nothing. More than any composer who has ever lived, Debussy suggests the landscape-painter, and water-colours rather than oils. Nowhere else in music do you get such a sense of sky and air and cloud and water; one feels he is a musician who would, above all others, have delighted Pater. There is a purity of outline, a clarity of colour, a melodic distinction that reminds one of the gracious beauty of Pico della Mirandola, and with a sudden realization of his nationality one understands that he upholds the grand Latin tradition with its marvellous sense of the concrete. Debussy is an artist like Verocchio, Donatello, and Cellini. There is no mysticism in his *Pelléas and Mélisande*, only extreme subtlety of sense. His rhythms are extraordinarily delicate, supple, and wavering; the rhythms of most German composers seem coarse by comparison. It is ungracious and miserable to dwell on what a man has not given us who has left such a wealth of rare beauty behind. A man who can create such intangible loveliness as the first Arabesque for pianoforte will not come often into this world.

XXIX

ON CONDUCTING

MANY people mistake stick-waving for conducting. I did for a great number of years; and I well remember as a child that there stood on a table in our drawing-room in its open case a sumptuous baton which some society had presented to my father. This magnificent stick was of ebony, with a handle of ivory, embossed and inlaid with translucent stones, and with a gold band, on which was engraved a laudatory inscription. I could not understand why my father never used it, and one day when he happened to be in the room I said to him: "Father, why don't you use that marvellous and glittering"—I was fond of long words when I was ten—"baton?" "That!" he exclaimed, "I'd rather use a handkerchief!" This brusque reply gave me indescribable pain, and for years I brooded in secret over the affair, wondering what could be wrong with that baton that seemed to me so lovely; until in the end it faded out of my mind and I no longer even noticed it lying on the table when I went into the drawing-room.

This, then, was the first lesson I learned about

conducting—that the loveliness of the baton does not count. The next stage was to learn that the gracefulness or energy with which the stick is waved also does not count. It was many, very many, years before I learned this. Most adults who are fond of music and go frequently to orchestral concerts judge a conductor entirely by his face or, shall I say, personality, and by the way he waves his stick. Of the two the former is the more reliable. Now, the beating of time with a stick by a man perched on a box in front of an orchestra is nothing. It may make things a little easier occasionally for the weaker members, but if a quartet, septet, and octet can play without a conductor to beat time, then an orchestra of seventy or one hundred can—for there are not seventy or a hundred different parts in such an orchestra, but only about fourteen or fifteen. The conductor is there because the orchestra is, or should be, playing *his* conception of the music ; he is there at the performance to remind them of the fact, and by his gestures occasionally, if necessary, to recall points which he has explained at rehearsal. I remember hearing at Munich an American conduct the Konzert-Vereinigung Orchestra in Dvorák's Fifth (New World) Symphony. He stood in front of the orchestra on a high platform, he beat time regularly through every movement, but as regards having any influence on the playing of the work he might as well not have been there, for he simply did not affect their playing any more than if he had been in the back row of the hall beating time with

his foot. Many professional conductors who think they are conducting are merely beating time to the orchestra's playing, fluctuating in energy and precision of stick-waving exactly as the orchestra varies its playing as it was last taught.

Von Bülow's famous *mot*, that there are two classes of conductors, the one with the score in his head and the other with his head in the score, is witty and true, but does not go to the root of the matter. Many indifferent conductors are capable of the feat of memory necessary to conduct without a score. The fact that a man can memorize a score easily tells us nothing of his capacity as a conductor; he may, in fact, be hopelessly bad. There is another qualification of a technical nature which was once —in the days when orchestral players were less efficient, less educated, and with less goodwill towards strange conductors than now—even more important than it is to-day, and that is a knowledge of the compass and nature of all the instruments in the orchestra. This knowledge, which is absolutely essential to the composer, is of less importance to the conductor, for to-day most of the players in a first-class orchestra are virtuosos, with whom it is rather a matter of pride that no composer could write anything in their compass that they couldn't play; so that composers, too, are less likely to have the experience Tschaikovsky had with one of his Suites when Taniev wrote to him that the flutes objected to playing triplets for twenty-two bars without a break, and the soloist said it was bad

for his lips to play a certain sequence of notes, so he wanted to play another sequence. Tschaikovsky, technically one of the best equipped of composers, replied :

> " (the flutes) could easily manage to play such a passage for 220 bars. It would be very innocent to imagine that this must be done in one breath. They can breathe every time. I play the flute a little myself, and am certain of it. (As for the oboist) I like the idea that the high notes are ruination to Herr Z.'s lips ! ! ! It is a thousand pities these precious lips, from which Frau Z. has stolen so many kisses, should be spoilt for ever by E in alt. But this will not hinder me from injuring these sacred lips by writing high notes—notes, moreover, that every oboist can easily play, even without a French mouthpiece."

The more technical knowledge a conductor has the better, but it is not mere technical knowledge any more than it is memory or capacity to wave a stick gracefully to the required rhythm that makes a great conductor. The vital matter is conception, which includes the conductor's imaginative understanding of the work he is to interpret and his power of making that conception clear and of inspiring his players and getting his ideas rendered adequately by the orchestra. All this is done at rehearsal, and when the performance actually comes, a conductor who knows his business has only to look at his men. No frantic and incessant stick-wagging for him ; he can fold his arms and just nod, and the

orchestra will glow into a mighty crescendo that will make all hearts tremble. He does not give every clarionet, 'cello, or horn entry his beat, he does not flap his elbows violently to each awe-inspiring thud of the drum, he does not try to accentuate trumpet-blasts with his fists, he does not scrape the ground in an effort to lift the violins to soar into the empyrean. None of these meaningless and futile antics is for him ; for bars he may lay down his stick and smile or look significantly at his players as the mass of sound waxes and wanes about him. He is restrained in his movements, and therefore each gesture that he does make is so much the more significant. This virtue of restraint is essential ; for no conductor can hope to stimulate his players at a vital moment when he has been continuously nagging, whipping, and poking at them from the very first bar—yet how many of our best-known conductors have contracted this vice of constant gesticulation, with the natural result that their stick-waving becomes a separate show, an " extra " of which the orchestra takes not the slightest notice !

Most conductors are temperamentally limited in their sympathies and understanding, and can only conduct the music of one or two composers well. Sir Henry Wood, for example, often conducts Wagner effectively and accompanies a concerto better than almost anyone ; but although he is too good a musician and too experienced a conductor not to be able to give his audience an idea of

Beethoven, yet it is safe to say that no one who has only heard Beethoven conducted by Sir Henry Wood has ever really heard Beethoven at all. Both Sir Henry Wood and Mr. Landon Ronald can do sufficient justice to Wagner and Tschaikovsky, but if one of our young composers wrote a work really English in spirit—as English, for instance, as Edward Thomas's poems—then they might be both utterly lost, and it is possible that Mr. Adrian Boult would give us a far superior rendering.

Finally, most of the best-known conductors conduct the same works far too often. I should imagine that Sir Henry Wood is utterly sick of the sound of Tschaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, and of Beethoven's Third and Fifth, and of the bulk of Wagner. Both orchestra and conductor cannot help getting so stale and bored that it becomes an outrage on the dead composers to go on playing their works. I sometimes think that the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonic Society, and the Queen's Hall Orchestra should taboo all Wagner's, Beethoven's, and Tschaikovsky's works for two years. It would be an immense relief to all musical London. Let us hear Albeniz, Mahler, Brückner, Bela Bartok, Elgar, Scriabin, Strauss, Ravel, d'Indy, Glazounov, Smetana, Rimsky-Korsakov, Delius, Holst, Vaughan Williams, and as many young English composers as possible. Two years without Wagner, Beethoven, and Tschaikovsky, and conducting in England might be found to have improved fifty per cent.!

XXX

MUSICAL PLAYS

THE other night I went to see something that was described in my morning paper as "a musical play." To me "a musical play" sounds delightful until just after I have been to one; then I realize that a musical play is what you get when a composer who cannot write music is introduced to a dramatist who cannot write a play, and collaborating with him and finding the results hopeless, buys jokes from the stage doorkeeper, bits of business from the carpenters and scene-shifters, rummages in second-hand music shops for old songs to crib from, and when the mixture has been sufficiently rehearsed by a popular comedian without a memory and a charming young lady without a voice, advertises the result as "a new musical play." The critics of the dailies are at their wits' end to know what to say about these protean monsters who retain the same body under a multitude of faces, and the editors are in an even worse plight, for they never know whether to send their music critic, their prize bulldog expert, or their police-court reporter—except of those

happy journals where one man combines in his own person these important offices.

And yet these musical plays are popular, although it is true that they are popular not because, but in spite, of their music and their ideas. If it were not for the frequently charming dresses, the pretty, and occasionally fascinating, girls, and the fact that they make a bright and cheerful place to go to in an evening, they would not remain popular long. The want of enterprise and ideas in theatrical managers would appear less than human if we did not constantly remind ourselves of the timidity and feebleness of imagination which seem to seize everyone who depends to any large degree on public opinion. It is notorious among critics and people accustomed to observing carefully the concert and theatre-going public, that those who cater for the public's amusement are among the least reliable judges of what is likely to succeed. When any one of them strikes a success with some overdue idea, all the others immediately start imitating it *ad nauseam*. The poor thing is led out of every theatrical stable, each day getting more bony and emaciated; it is put into harness again and again, never new harness, only the old set continually reversed, and positively driven to death, until it absolutely won't "go" any further. One has only to go round the theatres and halls to find everywhere the same jokes, the same songs, and the same settings—the very tunes have all the same flavour, are cast in the same idiom. For twelve

months one will be greeted everywhere with the tag, "Wait and see," and without "Winston" most of our great comedians would become extinct. "Everybody's doing it," says one of those imported rag-times, and it is the truth, for either everybody is doing it or it isn't being done at all.

This is one of the reasons why our young composers, who ought to be writing musical plays in collaboration with some of our young, witty, and imaginative writers, are wasting their time writing orchestral sketches for performance once a year at the Promenades. They get no chance. No theatrical manager has the imagination to commission from them a musical play, pay them a lump sum down, give them a free hand, and produce it when completed, with the same care and lavishness as he expended before the war on the productions of the Vienna school—Lehar, Oscar Strauss, and Leo Fall. And, unless so commissioned, they will never be produced, because the struggle for a living is too severe, and the time and hard labour necessary for librettist and composer to turn out a really first-class work is tremendous and far more than most people can be made to realize. The theatrical managers find it easier and safer to dish up the same thing under a different name again and again, and they have a few hacks who, not being artists, can turn out an inexhaustible supply of their cut-and-dried product at a moment's notice. At present it is as though Gilbert and Sullivan had never lived. Instead of

being the beginning of a national style of musical play whose development we might all have been enjoying to-day, together with the revenue brought into the country from royalties abroad, supporting a flourishing school of British musicians, their work has no sequel but this stuff without beauty, without ideas, without humour, which we take because it is gilded over for us by a handful of pretty girls.

I must confess I can see no remedy while those who produce musical plays and revues are doing far too good business to bother about new paths. When the reaction comes, there will be a slump, and competition may force enterprise; though, in hard fact, the survivors in this particular sphere generally survive because of their superior financial resources, not because of their superior enterprise. It is cold comfort trusting to mere competition to improve matters. The men who control the money have rarely the intelligence and taste to lavish it in the right direction, and their disasters frighten the smaller men. Also, as Mr. James Glover has pointed out, our seriously trained musicians have looked down upon this work. I must confess I cannot understand why —whether because they fail to appreciate its possibilities or whether because the sense of humour fails to survive the atmosphere of the Royal College and the Royal Academy of Music, I do not know. I am sure, however, that our young composers would be far better occupied in finding a

humorous, imaginative librettist among our young writers, and breaking new ground in musical plays, than in writing long and dreary Symphonic Poems, Scherzos, and Suites, which are nothing but watery imitations of Strauss, Debussy, and Dvorák, or in brooding over the problem of how they can impart new life to the now extinct Wagnerian music-drama.

XXXI

A NOTE ON HECTOR BERLIOZ

FOR years it has been difficult, living as we do in the midst of a torrent of novelties in literature and music, to find a temporary silence in which we might recollect the existence of forgotten masterpieces. In a fairly recent book Mr. Romain Rolland wrote a short but enthusiastic article on Berlioz, and there has been noticeable in musical circles an increasing tendency to a more generous estimate of one of France's greatest composers. I do not wish to say anything at the moment about Berlioz's music, except that it has always been underrated and that he was one of the greatest of pioneers, having more right than any other man to be considered the founder of modern orchestral music. There is unanimous agreement that he was the first to understand and develop the special technique of orchestration, and that the Russian mastery in this branch is due directly to his influence, yet there is nothing like the same realization of the fact that he was a fountain of the purest melody and that he has written music of the most exquisite delicacy and tenderness.

But what I wish particularly to draw attention to is his wonderful autobiography, covering the years 1803 to 1865. It was translated from the French and published by Macmillan in 1884, and although it is famous, I suspect that few of the younger generation have read it. This is a pity, because the man was as remarkable as his music. As a critic Schumann may have been more level-headed, and Wagner had more of a gift for elaborate theorizing, but Berlioz has a brilliance that is difficult to parallel outside of Heine. It is therefore strange to find him confessing :

" When I talk of laziness it only applies to the writing of prose. I have often sat up all night over my scores, and have spent eight hours at a time labouring at instrumentation, without once changing my position ; but it is an effort to me to write prose, and about the tenth line or so I get up, walk about the room, look out into the street, take up a book, and strive by any means to overcome the weariness and fatigue which instantly overpower me."

No doubt this was only part of the truth, for Berlioz is thoroughly unreliable, writing just as the mood takes him, and subject to the most extraordinary outbreaks of prejudices and dislikes. But what vivacity ! What wit ! What a rushing, overwhelming spate of language he has at command ! How vividly he can depict a scene ! What a power of irony and invective ! There is nothing quite like this autobiography in all literature. It deserves

immortality, for it is as entertaining as Boswell's Johnson, if in a different way. Wagner's *My Life* is to my mind one of the most fascinating of books; but Wagner, though not more egoistical than Berlioz, could never have begun his autobiography thus:

"I was born on the 11th December 1803, at La Cote St. André, a very small town in France, situated in the department of the Isère, between Vienne, Grenoble, and Lyons. During the months which preceded my birth, my mother never dreamt, as Virgil's did, that she was about to bring forth a branch of laurel. However painful to my *amour propre* this confession may be, I ought to add that neither did she imagine, like Olympias, the mother of Alexander, that she bore within her a fiery brand. Strange, I admit, but true."

No, this ironical touch is not to be found in Wagner, who, if there had ever been any legend of this sort about himself, would have solemnly recorded it. One of the special charms of Berlioz is that even the most ordinary things that befall him blaze with colour and passion. When he first takes Communion he describes it like this:

"Kneeling in the midst of a multitude of white-robed maidens, I was rudely awakened by the priest summoning me to take precedence of all those fair young girls, and go up to the altar first. Blushing at this act of discourtesy, I went up to receive the sacrament. As I did so the choir burst forth into the Eucharistic hymn. At the sound of those fresh young voices I was overwhelmed with a sudden rush of mystic passionate emotion. A new world

of heaven of which I had heard so much; and, strange proof of the power of true expression and the magical influence of real feeling, I found out ten years afterwards that the melody so ingeniously married to sacred words and introduced into a religious ceremony was Nina's song, *Quand le bien-aimé reviendra!* This was my first musical experience, and in this manner I became religious—my weekly confession to the director of my conscience was, 'My father, *I have done nothing*,' to which the worthy man always replied, 'Go on, my child, as you have begun,' and so I did for several years."

His father wished Berlioz to become a doctor, and this is his description of his first visit to the dissecting-room:

"When I entered that fearful human charnel-house, littered with fragments of limbs, and saw the ghastly faces and cloven heads, the bloody cesspool in which we stood, with its reeking atmosphere, the swarms of sparrows fighting for scraps, and the rats in the corners gnawing bleeding vertebræ, such a feeling of horror possessed me that I leapt out of the window, and fled home as though Death and all his hideous crew were at my heels. It was twenty-four hours before I recovered from the shock of this first impression, utterly refusing to hear the words anatomy, dissection, or medicine, and firmly resolved to die rather than enter the career which had been forced upon me."

No one but Berlioz has ever seen a dissecting-room like that, and did Shakespeare ever affect anyone else like this? He is writing of the first performance of *Hamlet*, in France, at the Odéon:

"This sudden and unexpected revelation of Shakespeare overwhelmed me. The lightning-flash of his genius revealed the whole heaven of art to me. I recognized the meaning of real grandeur, real beauty, and real dramatic truth, and I also realized the absurdity of the ideas circulated by Voltaire, in France, about Shakespeare. But the shock was too great, and it was a long while before I recovered from it. I became possessed by an intense, overpowering sense of sadness. I could not sleep, I lost my spirits, my favourite studies became distasteful to me, and I spent my time wandering aimlessly about Paris and its environs. During that long period of suffering I can only recall four occasions on which I slept, and then it was the heavy death-like sleep produced by complete physical exhaustion. These were one night on some sheaves in a field near Ville-juif; one day in a meadow in the neighbourhood of Sceaux; once on the snow on the banks of the frozen Seine, near Neuilly; and, lastly, on a table in the Café du Cardinal at the corner of the Boulevard des Italiens and the Rue Richelieu, where I slept for five hours, to the terror of the garçons, who thought I was dead and were afraid to come near me."

When *Romeo and Juliet* was announced, he describes how he was so fearful the free list might be suspended that, although he had a pass, he rushed off and bought a stall:

"From that moment my fate was sealed. After the harrowing sufferings, the tearful love, the bitter irony, the black meditations, the heart-rending sorrows, the madness, the tears, mourning, catastrophes, and malign fortune of Hamlet—the dark clouds and icy winds of Denmark—the change was

too great to the hot sunshine and balmy nights of Italy—to the love, quick as thought, burning as lava, imperious, irresistible, illimitably pure and beautiful as the smile of an angel; the raging revenge, heart-breaking embraces, and desperate struggles between love and death. And so, at the end of the third act, scarcely able to breathe, stifled with a feeling as though an iron hand held my heart in its grip, I cried out, 'I am lost!'"

It is impossible in a small space to give anything like an adequate idea of the wealth of humour and criticism in Berlioz's two volumes of autobiography or to convey the effect of this extraordinary man who was a whirlwind of tempestuous emotion, and whose usual attitude to life is summed up in his exclamation: "Destruction! Fire and thunder! Blood and tears! My brain shrivels at the thought of such horrors." The nobility of his character (and his sense of the dramatic) is shown by the pathetic account of the symphony dreamed and wilfully forgotten for fear of taking the bread out of the mouth of his dying wife. There is one more quotation, however, that I cannot omit. It is after the death of his second wife:

"I am in my sixty-first year; I have neither hopes, nor illusions, nor great thoughts left. My son is nearly always absent; I am solitary. My contempt for the folly and meanness of men, my hatred of their detestable ferocity, are at their height, and I say hourly: 'When death wills.' Why does it delay?"

XXXII

THE ORIANA MADRIGAL SOCIETY

IF any foreign musician of my acquaintance were to come to London for the first time I would naturally wish to take him to the best we had to offer. It would not be Covent Garden, assuredly, not even were it under the control of Sir Thomas Beecham and we were being regaled with Russian Opera and Ballet. One can hear Russian Opera in other places besides London, and we still await a Granville Barker in opera production to lift our performances above or even up to the continental level. Neither would it be to the Royal Philharmonic Society, nor to hear the London Symphony Orchestra, nor to the Queen's Hall Orchestra. I would not try to dazzle him with any of our conductors, although we have two or three who are excellent. Nor have we any String Quartet which could possibly excite one who would, as a matter of course, have heard the famous Capet Quartet of Paris, now, alas! no more, through the loss of the Brothers Casadesus, fighting for France at the front. No, I would renounce all these, and take him to a concert of the Oriana Madrigal

Society, confident of giving him a musical experience not to be surpassed outside of England or in it. I confess to always looking forward to their concerts with a violent impatience. The Oriana Society is like a queen jealous of her favours, bestowing them on us with reluctance and making her devoted admirers wait long intervals for her reappearance, as though she feared they were not quite worthy of her. And they are not, they could not be. If musical London knew anything at all, Bond Street, on the occasion of an Oriana concert, would be one surging mass of people grimly determined to get into that Æolian Hall for love or money.

After hearing the Plain Song, "Unto Us a Child is Born," and Sweelinck's sixteenth-century motet, *Hodie Christus natus est*, adequately rendered, one is ready to weep tears of joy. Each time I hear the Oriana Society it is like making a new discovery. Their programmes are a delight just to read over to oneself, including as they always do old English church and secular music of rare and unforgettable beauty. If by any chance anything mediocre ever creeps in, it is rendered with such perfection of tone, such beautiful articulation, such crispness, and at the same time, when necessary, with such a flowing legato that it has you entranced. To simply hear the choir hold a final chord is alone worth going many, many miles. As for things like Martin Shaw's arrangement of the thirteenth-century words and tune, *Angelus ad Virginem*,

and the motet *Magnum nomen Domini*, arranged by M. Prætorius (sixteenth century), both sung by the choir (unaccompanied, of course) in Latin, exquisitely enunciated, words simply fail to describe their effect. I can only repeat that I could weep tears of joy for such perfect and holy beauty. The honorary conductor, Mr. C. H. Kennedy Scott, is equally at home in the fine modern English work of men like Vaughan Williams, Balfour Gardiner, Gustav Holst, W. G. Whittaker, and others who, in their part songs and choral work generally, are continuing the old national tradition and doing much the most vital and fructifying work in music in England to-day. The Oriana Society and these composers much more truly represent English music than any of our orchestras or large societies, and it is real music, not sham Teutonicism, sweepings from the concert-halls of Germany, pseudo Strauss, bogus Wagner, petrified Brahms, or pale reflections of Debussy and Ravel which, together with our drawing-room ballads, are thought by many foreigners, with the assistance, it must be confessed, of influential concert-givers here, to constitute England's contribution to music. Well might we despair if it were so! But let the foreign musician pay a visit to one of the Oriana Society's concerts to learn that there is something that we may rightly and proudly call English music. But above all, our own people should support this Society by becoming subscribers. It would not be easy to find a

more effective way of assisting young composers and promoting a National School of Music worthy of comparison with our national literature, and equally powerful in the work of regenerating our social life.

XXXIII

A NOTE ON THE *B MINOR MASS*

THE *B minor Mass* is officially regarded as Bach's masterpiece. When I say "officially" I mean it is so regarded by Church musicians, writers of programme notes, academic professors, and all the amateurs who have never heard it. Personally, I can only say that there are many works by Bach which give me greater pleasure. If I had to choose between the Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues and the *B minor Mass* I should plump for the former, and there are many others of Bach's compositions which I should be loth to lose for the *B minor Mass*—although I would certainly give up both the St. Matthew and the St. John Passion for the Mass. A work on so gigantic a scale as the *B minor Mass* must always impress us by its mere proportions. In Bach's case the difficulty of appreciating the music at its true value is complicated by Bach's astounding virtuosity. Take, for example, the opening *Kyrie*. It begins with a chorus in five parts, continues with a duet between soprano and alto, and concludes with another chorus in

four parts. Now, when the *Kyrie* begins it is most impressive, the mere volume of the voices moving in a steady and remorseless counterpoint, together with the orchestra, and the underlying organ *continuo* produces an effect of massive power which is most exhilarating. But, intrinsically, its æsthetic value is about on the same level as the æsthetic value of the sight of a company of the Guards marching past the colours with an almost absolute regularity and rhythmic perfection. After the first thrill of excitement has passed we find ourselves beginning to wait for something to happen. We sit patiently through the *Kyrie* and get well into the *Gloria* and then a gradual conviction of monotony can no longer be resisted. Yes, already Bach's *B minor Mass*, "the crowning achievement of Bach's genius as a creative musician," begins to grow monotonous. It is still impressive, and no doubt to an academic musician, with the score in his hands and his soul long ago defunct, this charge of monotony would appear incredible, but then his interest is almost entirely if not absolutely technical. It is a source of everlasting amazement to him to contemplate Bach's prodigious skill and fertility of invention. But what do I care for Bach's prodigious skill? Even such virtuosity as Bach's is valueless unless it expresses some ulterior beauty or, to put it more succinctly, unless it is as expressive as it is accomplished. The value of the actual musical material of most of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* seems to me to be slight, and what pleasure we get is

derived from the consummate skill with which it is handled.

Dr. Terry, in his excellent edition of Forkel's *Bach*, says (relative to the fifty-three Cantatas composed from 1736–1744): "There are few phenomena in the record of art more extraordinary than this unflagging cataract of inspiration in which masterpiece followed masterpiece with the monotonous periodicity of a Sunday sermon." In my enthusiasm for Bach I swallowed this statement when I first met it, but if Dr. Terry will excuse the expression, it is arrant nonsense. Creative genius does not work in this way. Masterpieces are not produced with the monotonous periodicity of a Sunday sermon. In fact, if we stop to think we shall understand that this "monotonous periodicity" was exactly what was wrong with a great deal of Bach's music. Bach, through a combination of natural ability and quite unparalleled concentration on his art, had arrived at the point of being able to sit down at any minute of any day and compose what had all the superficial appearance of being a masterpiece. It is possible that even Bach himself did not know which was a masterpiece and which was not, and it is abundantly clear to me that in all his large-sized works there are huge chunks of stuff to which inspiration is the last word that one could apply. The dunderheaded professional musicians can hardly be expected to know the difference between Bach and Bach. To them he is the Protestant Pope of music and, like

the other Pope, infallible. But I say that the pretty trumpet work in the four-part chorus of the *Gloria*, for example, is a proof that Bach was being consciously clever and brightening up his stuff, and that he was not at that moment writing with the spontaneity of those really creative moments which are popularly called inspired. When, however, we get to the final chorus of the *Gloria* in five parts something happens. Those who have any instinct for music can feel the change at once. They can also feel that the opening five-part chorus of the *Credo* which follows might have been written by Mr. Frank Bridge.

Just let us think for one moment that the words of this chorus begin with the tremendous statement *Credo in unum Deum*, and be staggered that they seem to have meant no more to J. S. Bach than they would mean to the average organ-grinder. The music shows no sign of Bach's imagination having been fired at all; the old Leipzig Cantor simply took up his pen and reeled off this chorus as any master craftsman might polish off a ticklish job in the course of a day's work.

But the *Credo* does not remain long at this level. It contains some magnificent choruses, including the sublime *Crucifixus* and the delightful bass Aria with *oboi d'amore obbligati*. Then the opening chorus of the *Sanctus* is another movement which could not be praised too highly. Although it is absolute blasphemy to say so, I feel I should like the organ part cut out altogether in any performance with a

large modern orchestra, but this is because I detest the conjunction of the organ with the modern orchestra. The organ will not blend with the orchestra until we get mechanical horns, trumpets, and tubes—in fact an entire keyboard orchestra.

XXXIV

ON PIANISTS

THE commonest of all virtuosos is the efficient pianist, and nothing more tedious can well be imagined than a recital by one of these efficient pianists, some of whom can play simultaneously two Chopin studies with intricate variations of their own, as I once heard a wonderful bald-headed German do in Munich. This man had a European reputation, and was so marvellous that there were only three people in the hall. He had gone bald wondering why it was that another pianist who could play only one Chopin study at a time could keep on giving recitals in town after town, and always to full halls, often with people standing wherever it was possible to squeeze them in. Pianists like this bald-headed German are generally intolerable to listen to because of their hard tone and their general mental inflexibility. Their technique has often been acquired painfully, and they seem determined to communicate some of the pain to their auditors. They push their way over a composition like a steam-roller across a metal road, and one listens in anguish for the final

terrifying crunch which signals that the piece has been demolished.

In a different class from these human pianolas are the piano-punchers, men whom a pacific Providence has not allowed to become pugilists. These are often jovial and exuberant fellows of varying merit. It is generally possible to listen to even the worst of them with some pleasure, while the best of them can be magnificent. I imagine that Rubinstein was a pianist of this type, and certainly his namesake Mr. Arthur Rubinstein is. A recital by Mr. Arthur Rubinstein could never be dull—he is far too full of vitality—and although it would be impossible to say that his technique was greater than Mr. Joseph Hofman's (it is probably not nearly so great) yet he is far more exciting to listen to, because he is more emotional. The piano-puncher, emotional at his best, often has considerable refinement, and can sometimes play with great delicacy and tenderness. What he generally lacks is the exquisite sensibility of the more sensuous pianist, the sort of pianist who is naturally drawn to play Debussy and Ravel, who gets an extraordinary gratification from pure tone and from a gradation and blending of tone, and from what one might call the "colour" of harmony. This exquisite sensibility is quite different again (being much more carnal) from the romantic sensibility of those young ladies of the mid-Victorian novel who swoon from extreme delicacy. Theirs was an exquisiteness of sentiment rather than of sense, and together with

a very considerable physical gift of sensuous perception, it is found very highly developed in the playing of Vladimir de Pachmann, who when playing often chatters like a heroine in a novel by Fanny Burney.

There is finally that class of pianists remarkable for their intellectual power, of which the chief is undoubtedly Busoni. A friend once described Busoni's playing to me as leaving him with the impression of having been in a "cast-iron cathedral, adorned with frescoes of infernal flames, where Busoni performed ironic rites on a Chappell piano," and I feel inwardly convinced that this description is far from being a mere picturesque exaggeration. Extraordinary as Busoni's intellectual power is, I do not find his playing satisfactory. I should not mind its being unemotional, but it is not unemotional—it is strongly emotional in a very unusual way, suggesting a mind twisted and warped and passion expressing itself in an icy coldness and a cold-blooded devilry towards natural human desires. So I feel that Busoni's intellectuality is not a valuable intellectuality, but a cranky intellectuality. There are many pianists who stimulate and delight us at a first hearing, but there are very few who wear well, and the perfect pianist is not to be found. There is one curious feature in the public attitude towards virtuosos, and it is that once a man has been recognized as a great pianist he is expected to remain a great pianist for the rest of his life. But I am inclined to think that few of

them remain first-rate for any length of time: they generally become very good copies of an Old Master.

These classifications I have made are extremely rough, and permit of an infinite number of individual combinations, each with a flavour and a personality all its own.

XXXV

STYLE IN SINGING

NOT so very many years before the war, if one stayed in any of the smaller German towns, one's eyes were continually affronted by the shocking lack of taste in dress shown by the majority of German women. It was not that the matrons were more matronly, the dowagers more dowageresque, and the frumps more frequent and "frumpier" than anywhere else in the world: it was that even the young girl, the *Backfisch*, was a sight hideous beyond belief, with flat shoes, worsted stockings, and a skirt like a potato sack. There seemed to be a complete lack of any sense of style. The Germans appeared to have no eyes, and to their dull sense women were as like one another as sheep—which, indeed, they were very like.

But little by little all that changed. Vienna—which has been the greatest civilizing influence in Europe for many centuries—taught German men and women to use their eyes, and the refinement in dress and manners that took place throughout Germany during the ten years before the war was astonishing. In Munich one saw shopping in the

streets numbers of beautiful and elegant women on whom it was a delight to look, and in Vienna, at the innumerable recitals in their fine new triple concert-hall, the elegance and exquisite beauty of the women was on a level with the music—that is to say it surpassed anything one could see or hear in London.

But where Germany stood during the greater part of the nineteenth century in respect of dress, we in England stand to-day in respect of singing. We have absolutely no perception, no sense of refinement or style in this matter whatsoever. In our taste for singing we are (and I am including London) a nation of frumps—dowdy beyond all description. The reason is largely that the average Londoner never hears any good singing. It is safe to say that probably his sole experience of professional singers is at the Chappell or Boosey or Enoch Ballad Concerts. Now the standard of singing at the average Ballad Concert represents the standard of Weldon's Paper Patterns in dress. But is it useful, practical stuff—better, perhaps, than nothing? Some, not I, may think so, but certainly it has no beauty, no distinction whatever. The singing that is heard in an average suburban drawing-room is on a still lower level. It is really amazing that the young English girl, who really shows considerable taste in her shoes, her stockings, her gloves, and all the details of her dress, should play and sing in the most slap-dash, careless, and dowdy way songs that are shapeless, tasteless, and of the cheapest shoddy.

Somebody once said to me, what does it matter what a girl looks like, so long as she has a good heart. I replied that I couldn't have every girl's heart, but I could see every girl's dress. So there are people without any musical ear who like a song because it has a good sentiment :

> "Wait for me, dear, if you pass the way
> Of the sunset fields when the hour is late,
> There, in the hush of the dying day,
> Dearest, wait!"

Many a man will approve of this exhortation to wait. It is, he feels, a piece of advice badly wanted; most of the waiting in his experience has been done by him, but his approval of the moral should not influence his judgment of the song. A song is not meant to be a method of giving advice, or of inculcating sound sentiments : it is like an opera-cloak or a fan, a work of art designed to be beautiful in itself. The ear, like the eye, has to be cultivated to appreciate this beauty, and Heaven knows that in London it gets little chance, since most of the well-known English concert-singers have less taste and less æsthetic sense than the average suburban dressmaker.

There is only one way of cultivating the ear, and that is by hearing really good singers. We had in London, at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, an opportunity to hear in *The Beggar's Opera* a singer who was a real stylist—I mean Miss Sylvia Nelis, who took the part of Polly Peachum. The singing at this delightful show was on a superior level all through, particularly so in the case of Mr.

Frederick Ranalow, but it reached a high-water mark of distinction in Miss Sylvia Nelis. Those who have not heard Miss Nelis, or hearing her have not particularly marked her, should take the next opportunity that comes, and listen intently to that exquisite phrasing and clean vocalization. Once they have done so, and have realized the wonderful beauty of real singing, they will, I hope, not be able to endure again the crude, blatant vulgarity of the average well-known soprano. The unmusical person is sure to expect something startling or hair-raising in Miss Nelis's singing, and will at first possibly be disappointed. But remember that style is a matter of perfection in detail. The best-dressed woman, like the best singer, is not the "loudest."

It was the one solid merit of the Grand Opera season at Covent Garden that it gave London an opportunity of hearing really first-rate singing. Whatever might be said about the general production of the operas, however severely one might have been moved on occasion to criticize the musical quality of certain favourite works, the standard of singing remained immeasurably superior to anything to be heard in London or the provinces throughout the rest of the year. It has been my experience that good singing is the last thing that the really musical amateur learns to appreciate, and how he is ever to learn to appreciate it when he gets no chance of hearing it in England to-day, I am unable to imagine.

XXXVI

JAZZ MUSIC

I MUST confess to a liking for jazz music when it is good, and it was unfortunate that Sir Hugh Allen, the new head of the Royal College of Music, when making his onslaught on the popular taste for "beastly tunes," was not a little more specific in his denunciation, for it is futile to declaim vaguely against all popular music. I suspect that most of our best musicians are not very familiar with the songs of the theatre and the music-hall or with the waltzes, one-steps, and fox-trots of the dancing-clubs and restaurants; but they are making a great mistake if they imagine that this music is all bad or "beastly." No one can deny that the tunes of the average musical comedy are, as a rule, without beauty or distinction; but they are extremely academic. They are modelled on tunes that have attracted in the past, and they have a certain smoothness and lack of character that betokens the training of the schools. The absence of crudeness, clumsiness, or originality could not be more marked if their composers were pupils of the Royal College or the Royal Academy

of Music. One would almost imagine that Sir Hugh Allen believed that an academic musical training and a familiarity with the best music of the world's greatest composers must inevitably give a man good taste and enable him to write good tunes! How many of Sir Hugh Allen's students can write a beautiful tune? The Royal College of Music is lucky if it possesses one. But what is to be done while we are waiting for that one, and is he to provide all the music-hall singers and all the revues and musical comedies with their music? The fact is, that there is a large commercial demand for music, and the numerous schools and colleges of music in the country have been busy for a long time meeting that demand. There is no commercial demand for genius because genius cannot be supplied with the certain regularity of the A.R.C.M. or A.R.A.M. or the morning's milk. But there is no reason why the quality of the commercial product should not be continually improved, and this is, no doubt, what Sir Hugh Allen was really aiming at. This improvement is dependent upon the existence of some faculty called "taste," but I must confess to being wholly sceptical as to the power of scholastic training to impart "taste." It has not been my experience that men or women acquire "taste" by mere association with good music. It seems to me as unscientific and as untrue as to think that if I develop my biceps by Sandow exercises my children will inherit them. Every one can perhaps develop

to a certain limited extent a faculty that he has already got, but I suspect that even this is an erroneous idea, and that the process of development is not under our control at all. However, be that as it may, experience shows us many an accomplished musician, accustomed since childhood to the best music, whose "taste" or judgment is no better than that of the first wild baboon one might catch in the Congo. Does this seem an exaggeration? I am certain it is not so. I believe that the more plausible and more probable a theory or an argument is, the less likely it is to be true. The paradoxes of Mr. Chesterton are nothing to the paradoxes of reality, and one of the commonest of paradoxes is the trained musician who can discern the beastliness of the tunes he never hears —the tunes of the rag-time comedian and the gramophone dance-record, but is completely taken in by vulgar and banal tunes elaborately disguised for a large orchestra. Speech may have been given us to conceal our thought, but brains or technique are certainly acquired by the modern musician to conceal his spiritual beggary.

What our academic teachers are really asking for from the composers of popular music is more skill. They are so accustomed to hearing poverty of thought and crudity of feeling well masked by the adroit manipulation of technical devices, that they are horrified when they come up against vulgarity and "beastliness" in all its nakedness.

Composers, like men and women, can be taught

good manners, but nobody surely pretends that their essential nature is thereby changed. The same variety of individual character remains underneath; all that has been done is to push that individual character out of sight for the mutual convenience of society. However excellent this may be in daily life it is fatal in art. The music-hall songs and rag-times may very well be beastly, sentimental, and vulgar, but in so far as they express the life of the people and not their drawing-room behaviour they are far more valuable and far less vulgar than the carefully trained, colourless insipidity of the composer produced by the Royal College or the Royal Academy of Music who has been so remorselessly dosed with Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, and Tschaikovsky, and so combed and flat-ironed that he has no more individuality than any other of the starched shirt-fronts produced by his musical laundry. What do these students feel? What do they think? Does anyone ever hear anything of them in after life? Would they ever know whether they were listening to Brahms or Beethoven except by sheer exercise of memory? Have they any passion for music? Have they any blood in their veins at all? Their works seem to deny them all the attributes of life. Better far Mr. Jack Jones's "Tipperary" or the *El Reliquario* one-step and many a rag-time than Mr. Frank Bridge's *Lament for the "Lusitania,"* Mr. Cyril Jenkins's *Magic Cauldron,* or Mr. Percy Grainger's Suite *In a Nutshell*—that huge and elaborate

orchestration of a pennyworth of high spirits which once exhausted nearly a hundred musicians and nearly as many machines at a Symphony concert conducted by Sir Henry Wood at the Queen's Hall.

XXXVII

PLASTIC MUSIC

OF the disciplinary value of Mr. Jacques Dalcroze's system of Eurhythmics there can be no doubt. It should form a part of the curriculum of every school, both for boys and girls, although to my mind its chief virtue is not that on which Monsieur Dalcroze and his supporters are accustomed to lay the greatest stress. I once had the pleasure of attending a demonstration at the Lyceum Theatre, when a very large audience was held fascinated for a whole morning by the really beautiful and striking plastic music—to coin what seems to me the most suitable expression—exhibited by Monsieur Dalcroze's pupils.

By Eurhythmics its founder means rhythmic movement, ear-training, and improvisation — a training in all of which his school provides; but what is original in Monsieur Dalcroze's scheme—original I mean in modern times—is the expression of certain basic elements of music in movement or, to put it more concretely, the introduction of the body into musical training, which in modern times has become purely intellectual—apart from deep-

breathing, vocal exercises, and the quick-fingeredness of instrumental virtuosos. These latter, however, lead merely to what might almost be considered as physical deformity, since they only develop a few muscles, such as the muscles of the chest and arms, producing tenors and sopranos who are genuine monsters, and pianists who could fell an ox with their right arm, snap a ship's-biscuit with their fingers, but scarcely totter a hundred yards.

The foundation of Monsieur Dalcroze's method is the expression of musical rhythm in movement, and although he deprecates the application of the term "Rhythmic Gymnastics" to his system because it suggests physical drill rather than intellectual drill, yet the peculiar value of Eurhythmics lies in its physical realization of intellectual drill with a consequent harmony of body and mind that approaches an ancient ideal. What is wrong with modern gymnastics, and athletics in general, is that the body is treated as a sort of Caliban, to be trained to the utmost power of speed and strength and directed by a separate, governing intelligence or Ariel, which itself needs no training but is supernatural, "born, not made." As a consequence, we find that from many athletes the neglected Ariel has flown altogether, leaving poor Caliban huge, mighty, and incapable—his plight only the more pitiable for his strength. It is very likely that if we took two equally matched "rugger" or "soccer" teams and could re-train them from childhood, giving the one a three or five years' course of Dalcroze's Eurhythmics taken out

of their physical training hours, that this team would simply "smother" the team brought up on the ordinary athletic training. I emphasize this point because it seems to me that the virtue of Monsieur Dalcroze's Eurhythmics lies in danger of being overlooked by people who, owing to some unfortunate idiosyncrasy, are indifferent to music and imagine that Eurhythmics is merely a novel method of teaching music. As a matter of fact, music really begins where Eurhythmics ends, for Eurhythmics is concerned only with some of the intellectual foundations of music. It would be possible to become the ablest graduate of the Dalcroze School of Eurhythmics without having any fine power of perception as regards music. A first-class Eurhythmicist is as likely to be unable to discriminate good music from bad, to tell the difference between Sullivan and Hermann Darewski or between Wagner and Charpentier, as any professor of harmony who has ever lived. But he or she would have a physical grace and an adroitness and power of body and mind in the exercise of music or of any physical or intellectual task that would be far superior to that of the average music-student or athlete. "We teach music, not dancing," exclaimed Monsieur Dalcroze from the stage of the Lyceum Theatre, and Monsieur Dalcroze is right in emphasizing the distinction, since it is the intellectual training which his system gives that is valuable, but it is valuable mainly because, and unique only because, it is plastic, not abstract, like mathematics, or like

harmony and musical theory as it is ordinarily taught.

But when we have pretty well agreed that Eurhythmics is as valuable a training as its supporters claim it to be, and much the best method of combining intellectual and physical training yet evolved, there remains a question whether it is not possible to carry intellectual discipline too far. I am not sure, but that, even from a purely musical point of view, students trained a little too thoroughly in Eurhythmics might not lose in the apprehension of rhythmic subtlety. We do not altogether know the effect of discipline on the human brain. Certainly its apparent effect is to clarify the understanding, but does it really do this, or does it merely prevent the brain from looking sideways, as it were? Does it merely put blinkers on the horse so that there *seems* no alternative to the route straight ahead of him, although in reality there are thousands? I strongly feel that mental discipline, like every other sort of discipline, can be overdone, and that what it does is to set up in the brain a network of tramway lines, on which the consciousness travels up and down like a car, doomed never to leave the track and unable to explore the cross-paths and byways that exist, and are being extended faster than new lines are being built. It is a fact that we can govern our perceptions to see and hear what we have been trained to expect with such completeness of concentration that we become blind and deaf by a process of selection that has become unconsciously

automatic. That is why all great artists shrink in horror from the theories and systems in which smaller men so willingly enmesh themselves. But even from the point of view of the audience—who, to listen appreciatively, must themselves be artists of a kind—these systems are dangerous in excess, for they blunt the perceptions. My advice to parents and to all who are interested in Eurhythmics is, that they should be moderate. Let a child have not too long a course of Eurhythmics and then forget all about Eurhythmics for the rest of his life. This advice is not new, but it needs to be repeated at the advent of every fresh theory of education.

XXXVIII

CHURCH MUSIC

I WAS once presented by the author with a copy of a book dealing with Church music, which I know to be a very thorny subject,[1] and let me say before proceeding further that the publisher had not done his duty by this book, for it was printed on such paper that I threw it into the waste-paper basket three times, each time having to fish it out after remembering that it was a gift and that I had no right to be dissatisfied. Having read it, however, I found myself tolerating the inferior paper in the hope that the low price will ensure it a large circulation, particularly among parsons and habitual church-goers. I must frankly declare that Mr. Duncan-Jones knows a great deal more about Church music than I do, for I can only speak as one for whom music is more important than the Church. Nevertheless, I claim to be neither a barbarian nor a rationalist, and I should like to put the musical point of view of one who in his time

[1] *Church Music*, by A. S. Duncan-Jones, M.A., Perpetual Curate of St. Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill. Robert Scott. 3s. 6d. net.

has been a choir-boy, and has also attended the services of a great number of churches of all denominations—including the Baptist Chapel, the Jewish Synagogue, and the Roman Catholic Church in England and abroad. In the first place, not every musician will, I think, agree with Mr. Duncan-Jones that there is Church as distinct from secular music. That there is an historical distinction everybody knows, but that there is a fundamental musical difference few would to-day admit, and this becomes clearer the moment we substitute the word "religious" for "church." To the musician, Bach's Passions, his masses, his cantatas, sonatas, motets and preludes and fugues are music, neither "religious" nor "secular," and whether written for performance in church or concert-hall they are good or bad, great or mediocre for the same reasons. To tell a musician that his feelings on hearing the St. Matthew Passion in a cathedral would differ from his feelings on hearing it in the Queen's Hall, would be merely telling him that his feelings on hearing it would depend on whether he had a comfortable or uncomfortable seat, or was feeling ill or well, or happy or depressed, or had or had not paid for admission. Obviously, all circumstances affect one's feelings, and not least of all the "circumstance" of the church, but the nature of the music is unchangeable; it is grave or gay, noble or mean, spiritual or sensual, exalted or emotional, according to its nature and the spirit of its author. Now, in the concert-hall, we get the whole spirit of

man. Let us remember the magnificent words of Blake:

> "The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
> The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
> The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
> The nakedness of woman is the work of God."

My complaint against Church music is that its authors insist—under guidance from the Church—on giving us only part of the work of God, and that often a very inferior part, while pretending to give us all, or all that matters. There are musical historians who tell us that prior to the Papal decree of 1322 by Pope John XXII Church music was "like rag-time gone mad," because composers used folk-tunes and combined them with chants. I must confess that the idea of such procedure does not shock me, although the actual results might very well have done so. The return to plain-song may well have been what everybody claims, a real reform, but I am all against the idea that there is a special criterion for Church music. There is only one criterion, good music remains good music and bad remains bad, and the Church will always pull its reformers back into the abyss of bad music while it permits its members to ask, Is this appropriate? instead of: Is this good enough? Here we put our finger on the inherent difficulty of the Church's position. It is almost impossible for the Church not to give an impression of hypocrisy, for its emphasis is on its pretensions rather than its performances. The Royal Philharmonic Society is

supposed to provide the best music and the best artists. Its only pretensions are to call itself "Royal" and to put out its bust of Beethoven at each concert. It has a committee composed of eminent musicians, who are supposed to be able to discriminate between good and bad music. Well, to a certain extent they can so discriminate, but they do not claim infallibility even with regard to good and bad music, and if Beethoven's bust could blush it would have blushed often at the music it has had to hear.

The Church, however, does not merely know infallibly the difference between good and bad music (witness the Papal decrees), it knows the difference between Good and Bad. It is obvious that the brain of any one parson is an inadequate receptacle for such knowledge, and he consequently breaks down at all sorts of points, and the point where he breaks down most audibly is music. The music in the average church is truly a fearful thing, but the adoption of plain-song, though it will preserve the congregation from many horrors which they probably prefer, will not ensure beautiful music. Even Mr. Duncan-Jones, ardent as is his advocacy of plain-song, admits that the parish church "must be allowed a certain latitude" in its interpretation of it, and he warns the parson against the purist who will be sure to tell him his performance is an outrage. Here, it seems to me, Mr. Duncan-Jones lets in again the very devil he set out to exorcise. Plain-song has itself been many

times " reformed " in the history of the Church, and if we adopt it to-day to get rid of the vulgarity and emotionalism of the ordinary Church music but allow our parish church to make it a " vehicle of self-expression," it will very quickly have to be reformed once more. In short, plain-song is no panacea that will suddenly produce good music in our parish churches. The only way Church music can be improved is by a steady education in public taste, and in this it does not differ from other music. Luckily, there are a number of people, and among them is Mr. Duncan-Jones, who are steadily educating the public. If every parson in England could be made to buy this book and *made to understand it,* there would be at least one thing good in every church in England; and, to return to Blake, who knew more about our spiritual life than any man of the last thousand years," goodness can only exist in minute particulars "—which is why the Church, which has to be good in everything, is such a practical failure in spite of all its noble ideals.

XXXIX

INTERPRETATION IN MUSIC

I WENT to a recent recital by Fritz Kreisler naturally curious to know what I should think of his playing after an interval of eight years, and still more curious to compare his playing with that of Jascha Heifetz, whom I had heard only a few months before. I do not know what continental and American critics think of the relative merits of these two violinists, but here in England Kreisler seems to be accepted unanimously as a great violinist, while Heifetz has been for the most part damned as a mere virtuoso. Obviously, musicians and musical critics have some ideal standard to which they refer the performances of artists, and it may be interesting to try to find out what this ideal is and whether it is sound criticism to apply it. To begin with, it must be noticed that there is no analogy in any other art to the executant in music. No, there is one, there is the reciter of poetry—hardly a comforting comparison for the musician!

There are also, in Drama, the actors, but can we consider Drama as an art? Has not some great

critical contemporary said that Shakespeare was "no artist"? Meaning, I suppose, that he was a damned poet who stuck bits of his poems into other people's bad plays instead of putting them into anthologies as the moderns do. However, we cannot discuss here whether Drama is an art or not. I shall only say that in theatrical matters I side mainly with Mr. Gordon Craig and that what I am going to say about the musical executant applies also to the dramatic executant or actor. Now, the ideal, current during the last fifty or sixty years among "cultured" people both as to reciting poetry and to playing music, has been the ideal of "interpretation." The virtuosos of voice and instrument have been judged according as they fulfilled two requirements, the first being wholly technical and the second being wholly in the nature of expounding or interpreting the work played. So we get the stereotyped formula of criticism. "Miss Blank's technique is good, but she has not yet grasped the mystical nature of Franck's Prelude, Choral, and Fugue." Now this criticism has a meaning, it serves in a rough-and-ready way to convey the fact that there is something wrong with Miss Blank's playing, and, no doubt, if musical critics were paid five thousand a year, with a pension at fifty, and given adequate time to think, they could all tell us much more than that about Miss Blank's playing, and lead us very much closer to the heart of this mystery of an intelligent female who, after seven years in a first-rate conservatorium and five

years' individual study under distinguished pianists, still plays in such a way as to convey to an eminent critic the impression that she misses the whole point of the Franck Prelude, Choral, and Fugue whilst playing it with the greatest facility. Unfortunate female (and male) products of Leipzig, London, and Paris! Twelve years of unremitting toil of mind and fingers under the best masters the world produces, and at the end of it all merely the capacity to break the strings of a Chappell piano! Why were you not taught how to grasp the mystical nature of César Franck's very small output of pianoforte music? What is the good of all those professors and assistant-professors if the first musical critic who hears your performance after all those years of study declares it to be pointless—a mere digitation?

But now another and much more serious question must be asked. How did the critic grasp the mystical nature of Franck's Prelude, Choral, and Fugue, and what does he mean by it? Let us assume that the critic cannot play any musical instrument and cannot read the notes (for this will simplify the argument), we must then conclude that he has heard it played so many times that he understands it. It must also be admitted that there is such a gift as musical intuition; the musical critic, like the poet, is born not made, and there are people who have a power of immediately grasping the musical contents of a new work even at a single imperfect performance that is staggering to many a

highly trained academic musician. Now, this gift is closely related to the creative gift of the great composer—it springs from a similar unusual musical sensibility; but what makes the one creative and the other merely re-creative—as, for example, the reader of Shakespeare has to re-create the poetry of Shakespeare (for Shakespeare means nothing to an idiot, little to the readers of *John Bull*, and not much to our average Civil Servant)—cannot be examined here. It is enough to be reminded that every great work of art requires for its full appreciation a sensibility as great as its creator's. What was the matter with Miss Blank was that her sensibility was not even as great as the musical critic's. He felt that her playing was not sensitive, and so he said she missed the mysticism of the music—trying by the use of the word mysticism to suggest the kind of sensitiveness he missed. And here we come to the crux of the whole matter. Some have maintained that the "ear," by which they mean *the brain listening to sound*, is the sole judge of music; others think that the "heart," by which they mean the man as father, brother, lover, son, and sojourner in this world, is the sole judge of music; but there are those who believe that the music men think they make is *really* the music of the spheres, that something eternal and universal expresses itself in music, and unless they hear that they are not satisfied. He who has once heard the song of the Syrens will never again be satisfied with the summer songs of the washerwomen at Margate!

Nor will he be satisfied with an emotional performance of Tschaikovsky's Pathetic Symphony that may make all the fathers, brothers, sisters, lovers, and sons in the concert-hall weep.

There is no "music of the spheres" here! On the other hand, he cannot accept *the brain listening to sound* as a complete statement of the truth. Man is obviously more than a mere instrument listening to sound. What is to give the sounds their value? What is to make one set of sounds preferable to another? We have discarded the emotional reference, and so once more we are thrown back on some universal significance which these sounds must have and for which our instinct searches. When the music has that significance or that beauty (for the beauty is the significance) we are satisfied—but only then.

The critic has got to be dogmatic in this matter. He can only in the last resort declare this is beautiful or this is not beautiful, and he has slowly to win the confidence and the understanding of his readers so that when he uses the word "beautiful" they fathom the full richness of its meaning.

It follows from this argument that there is only one perfect way in which any piece of music can be played. Music—any music—is only played perfectly if it comes to us absolutely pure and universal, unadulterated by time or place. It may be that what we think is universal is not; our perfection may be imperfect but our imperfection is certainly still less perfect, and we cannot rest content with

that. But this is what we are doing when we demand of the performer "interpretation." "Interpretation" invariably means obtruding the personal character of the performer into the performance. So we get all sorts of readings of famous compositions: the sentimental reading, the erotic reading, the "all damned nonsense" reading, the pugnacious reading, the intellectual reading, the "young miss" reading, the old cynic reading, and, commonest of all, the "mixed" reading—produced by serious people who go to all the recitals of celebrated virtuosos and mark their scores.

How music is to be played so as to have that universality, that freedom from time or place, that rare and final beauty, neither I nor any man knows, but we know that quality when we hear it. I think Heifetz has it as no one else I have heard has had it. I do not know what it depends on, but I think our estimates of character are based on much too shallow foundations to be surprised at finding a boy of nineteen, of no particular intellectual gifts, possessing it; and a mature man of about fifty, of great culture and intelligence and of fine and genial nature, without it. Kreisler is, undoubtedly, a great violinist, for in him reason, sentiment, sensuousness, intelligence, vitality, and refinement are harmoniously blended. His playing is "interpretation" at its very best. To hear him is to hear music transmitted through the medium of a fine, fully developed human personality. To hear Heifetz is to hear the song of the Syrens.

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